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*The* STORY *of a* ROUND HOUSE  
JOHN MASEFIELD





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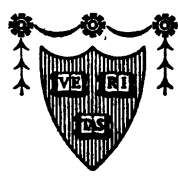
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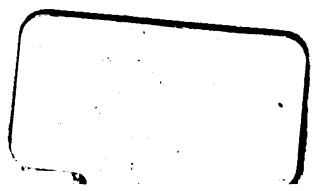
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TORONTO

THE STORY OF  
A ROUND-HOUSE AND  
OTHER POEMS

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

AUTHOR OF "THE EVERLASTING MERCY"  
"THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET," ETC.

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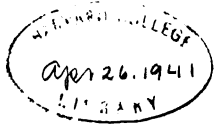
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## CONTENTS

	PAGE
DAUBER . . . . .	1
BIOGRAPHY . . . . .	187
Ships . . . . .	210
Truth . . . . .	219
They closed her Eyes . . . . .	221
The Harp . . . . .	227
I saw the Ramparts . . . . .	228
That Blessed Sunlight . . . . .	230
Song . . . . .	232
The Ballad of Sir Bors . . . . .	234
Spanish Waters . . . . .	237
Cargoes . . . . .	242
Captain Stratton's Fancy . . . . .	244
An Old Song re-sung . . . . .	247
St. Mary's Bells . . . . .	249
London Town . . . . .	251
The Emigrant . . . . .	254
Port of Holy Peter . . . . .	256
Beauty . . . . .	259
The Seekers . . . . .	260
Prayer . . . . .	263
Dawn . . . . .	265
Laugh and be Merry . . . . .	266
June Twilight . . . . .	268
Roadways . . . . .	270
Midsummer Night . . . . .	272
The Harper's Song . . . . .	274
The Gentle Lady . . . . .	276
The Dead Knight . . . . .	277



	PAGE
Sorrow of Mydath . . . . .	279
Twilight . . . . .	281
Invocation . . . . .	282
Posted as Missing . . . . .	283
A Creed . . . . .	285
When Bony Death . . . . .	288
The West Wind . . . . .	290
Her Heart . . . . .	293
Being her Friend . . . . .	295
Fragments . . . . .	296
Born for Nought Else . . . . .	300
Tewkesbury Road . . . . .	302
The Death Rooms . . . . .	304
Ignorance . . . . .	306
Sea Fever . . . . .	308
The Watch in the Wood . . . . .	310
C. L. M. . . . .	313
Waste . . . . .	315
Third Mate . . . . .	317
The Wild Duck . . . . .	320
Christmas, 1903 . . . . .	322
The Word . . . . .	324

**THE STORY OF A ROUND-HOUSE  
AND OTHER POEMS**



## DAUBER

### I

Four bells were struck, the watch was called  
on deck,

All work aboard was over for the hour,  
And some men sang and others played at  
check,

Or mended clothes or watched the sunset  
glower,

The bursting west was like an opening  
flower

And one man watched it till the light was  
dim,

But no one went across to talk to him.

He was the Painter in that swift ship's crew,  
Lampman and painter, tall, a slight-built  
man,

Young for his years and not yet twenty-  
two,

Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan.

Bullied and damned at since the voyage  
began,

“Being neither man nor seaman, by his  
tally,”

He bunked with the idlers just abaft the  
galley.

His work began at five; he worked all day,  
Keeping no watch and having all night in,  
His work was what the mate might care to  
say,

He mixed red lead in many a bouilli tin;  
His dungarees were smeared with paraffin;  
“Go drown himself,” his roundhouse mates  
advised him

And all hands called him Dauber and de-  
spised him.

Si, the apprentice, stood beside the spar,  
Stripped to the waist, a basin at his side,  
Slushing his hands to get away the tar,  
And then he washed himself and rinsed and  
dried.

Towelling his face, hair-towzelled, eager-eyed,  
He crossed the spar to Dauber and there  
stood

Watching the gold of heaven turn to blood.  
They stood there by the rail while the swift  
ship

Tore on out of the tropics, straining her  
sheets,

Whitening her trackway to a milky strip  
Dim with green bubbles and twisted water-  
meets,

Her clacking tackle tugged at pins and  
cleats,

Her great sails bellied hard and her masts  
leaned ;

They watched how the seas struck and burst  
and greened.

Si talked with Dauber, standing by the side.

“Why did you come to sea, Painter?” he  
said,

“I want to be a painter,” he replied,

“And know the sea and ships from A to Z,  
And paint great ships at sea before I’m  
dead.

Ships under skysails running down the  
Trade,

Ships and the sea; there’s nothing finer  
made.

“But there’s so much to learn, with sails  
and ropes,

And how the sails look, full or being  
furled,

And how the lights change in the troughs  
and slopes,

And the sea's colours up and down the  
world,

And how a storm looks when the sprays are  
hurled

High as the yard (they say) I want to see,  
There's none ashore can teach such things  
to me.

“And then the men and rigging, and the way  
Ships move, running or beating, and the poise  
At the roll's end, the checking in the sway,  
I want to paint them perfect, short of the  
noise,

And then the life, the half-decks full of boys,  
The fo'c's'les with the men there, dripping  
wet:

I know the subjects that I want to get.

“It's not been done, the sea, not yet been  
done,

From the inside, by one who really knows,



I'd give up all if I could be the one,  
But art comes dear the way the money  
    goes.

So I have come to sea, and I suppose  
Three years will teach me all I want to learn  
And make enough to keep me till I earn."

Even as he spoke his busy pencil moved  
Drawing the leap of water off the side  
Where the great clipper trampled iron-  
    hooved

Making the blue hills of the sea divide,  
Shearing a glittering scatter in her stride,  
And leaping on full tilt with all sails draw-  
    ing

Proud as a war-horse, snuffing battle, paw-  
    ing.

"I cannot get it yet, not yet," he said,  
"That leap and light and sudden change to  
    green,

And all the glittering from the sunset's red,  
And the milky colours where the bursts  
    have been,

And the great clipper striding like a queen  
Over it all, all beauty to the crown,  
I see it all, I cannot put it down.

"It's hard, not to be able. There, look  
    there,

I cannot get the movement nor the light:  
Sometimes it almost makes a man despair  
To try and try and never get it right.

O, if I could, O, if I only might,  
I wouldn't mind what hells I'd have to  
    pass,

Not if the whole world called me fool and  
    ass."

Down sank the crimson sun into the sea  
The wind cut chill at once, the west grew  
    dun.

"Out sidelights," called the mate; "Hi,  
where is he?"

The boatswain called, "Out sidelights, damn  
you; run."

"He's always late or lazing," murmured  
one,

"The Dauber, with his sketching." Soon  
the tints

Of red and green passed on dark water-  
glints.

Darker it grew, still darker, and the  
stars

Burned golden, and the fiery fishes came.

The wire-note loudened from the straining  
spars,

The sheet-blocks clacked together always  
the same,

The rushing fishes streaked the seas with  
flame,

Racing the one speed noble as their own,

What unknown joy was in those fish un-  
known.

Just by the roundhouse door as it grew dark  
The boatswain caught the Dauber with  
“Now, you.

Till now I've spared you, damn you, now  
you hark,

I've just had hell for what you didn't do.  
I'll have you broke and sent among the  
crew

If you get me more trouble by a particle.  
Don't you forget, you daubing, useless ar-  
ticle.

“You thing, you twice-laid thing from Port  
Mahon.”

Then came the cook's “Is that the Dauber  
there?

Why don't you leave them stinking paints  
alone?

They stink the house out, poisoning all the  
air,

Just take them out." "Where to?" "I  
don't care where.

I won't have stinking paints here." From  
their plates,

"That's right; wet paint breeds fever,"  
growled his mates.

He took his still wet drawings from the  
berth

And climbed the ladder to the deck-house  
top,

Beneath, the noisy half-deck rang with  
mirth

For two ship's boys were putting on the  
strop.

One, clambering up to let the skylight drop,  
Saw him and scuttled down and whispered

"Sammy,

Here's Dauber mooning on the deck-house,  
dammy."

"Watch what he does:" they watched;  
five pairs of eyes,  
Stared through the slit to see what Dauber  
did.

They saw him watch the rising moon with  
sighs,

Then bend to the ship's long boat on the skid  
And lay beneath her something which he  
hid.

"Myst'ry in high life," whispered one to  
t'other,

"The Foundling Babe, or Who was Peter's  
Mother?"

He stayed a moment, leaning on the boat,  
Watching the constellations rise and burn,  
Until the beauty took him by the throat  
So stately is their glittering overturn;

Armies of marching eyes, armies that yearn  
With banners rising and falling and passing  
by  
Over the empty silence of the sky.

He sighed again and looked at the great  
sails

To get a memory of their look at night,  
The high trucks traced on heaven and left  
no trails,

The moonlight made the topsails almost  
white,

The passing sidelight seemed to drip green  
light

And on the clipper rushed with fire-bright  
bows.

He sighed "I'll never do't," and left the  
house.

"Now, Sammy," said the reefers. Up they  
crept,

Treading on tiptoe, on the Dauber's track.  
They groped below the boat, their right  
    hands swept  
From chock to skid and came rewarded  
    back.

“Drawings, Lord love us, sketches, more, a  
    stack.

Hush, or they'll hear us. Hush. You little  
    fishes,  
There's boatswain making Dauber wash the  
    dishes.”

They took the drawings to the half-deck.  
    There  
Under the swinging lamp they looked and  
    mocked.

“‘A boat at night with trawl down, burning  
    a flare’

Lord's me; ‘An Ocean Charger’ . . . sickle-  
    hocked.



'*At sea.*' I'd do a better three parts  
cocked.

'*A topsail,*' without buntlines, Dauber's  
style;

Put end to end they almost reach a mile!"

The oldest reefer lit his pipe and spat,  
"We'll have some fun with these," he said.

"Now, Joe,

A job for you, and see you do it pat.

Pick up that empty tin, my son, and go

Aft to the lamp-room."

"Mate's there."

"Even so,

Do what you're told, lay aft and fill that tin

With turps and bring it back, or mind your  
skin."

"But Sam, the mate's there." "Jao, you

Kitmutgar;

Jao; pasea." He went, he filled the can,  
Dodging the mate, and "Here," he said,

"you are ;

This is the turps ; now Sammy, what's the  
plan ?"

"Rouse out a mess-clout now, my little  
man,

And wash these daubs with turps until  
they're gone.

And then we'll put them back. Heave  
round. Lay on."

They smeared the paint with turpentine  
until

They could remove with mess-clouts every  
trace

Of quick perception caught by patient skill  
And lines that had brought blood into his  
face ;

They wiped the pigments off and did erase,

With knives, all sticking clots: when they  
had done

Under the boat they laid them every one.

All he had drawn since first he came to  
sea,

His six weeks' leisure fruits, they laid  
them there;

They chuckled then to think how mad he'd  
be

Finding his paintings vanished into air.

Eight bells were struck, and feet from every-  
where

Went shuffling aft to muster in the dark,  
The mate's pipe glowed above, a dim red  
spark.

Names in the darkness passed and voices  
cried,

The red spark glowed and died, the faces  
seemed

As things remembered when a brain has  
died

To all but high intenseness deeply dreamed ;  
Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,  
And on the clipper rushed with tossing  
mast,

A bath of flame broke round her as she  
passed.

The watch was set, the night came, and the  
men

Hid from the moon in shadowed nooks to  
sleep,

Bunched like the dead, still like the dead, as  
when

Plague in a city leaves none even to weep.  
The ship's track brightened to a mile-broad  
sweep ;

The mate there felt her pulse and eyed the  
spars.

Southwest by south she staggered, under  
the stars.

Down in his bunk the Dauber lay awake  
Thinking of his unfitness for the sea.  
Each failure, each derision, each mistake,  
There in the life not made for such as  
he;

A morning grim with trouble sure to be,  
A noon of pain from failure, and a night  
Bitter with men's contemning and despite.

This in the first beginning, the green  
leaf,  
Still in the Trades before bad weather  
fell;  
What harvest would he reap of hate and  
grief  
When the loud Horn made every life a  
hell?

When the sick ship lay over, clanging her  
bell,  
And no time came for painting or for draw-  
ing,  
But all hands fought, and icy death came  
clawing?

Hell, he expected, hell. His eyes grew  
blind,  
The snoring from his messmates droned and  
snuffled,  
And then a gush of pity calmed his mind  
And the sharp torment of his thought was  
muffled,  
Without, on deck, the old, old seaman  
shuffled,  
Humming his song, and through the open  
door  
A moonbeam moved and thrust along the  
floor.

The green bunk-curtains moved, the brass  
rings clicked,  
The cook cursed in his sleep, turning and  
turning,  
The moonbeam's moving finger touched and  
picked  
And all the stars in all the sky were burning.  
"This is the art I've come for and am learn-  
ing,  
The sea and ships and men and travelling  
things.  
It is most proud, whatever pain it brings."

He leaned upon his arm and watched the  
light  
Sliding and fading to the steady roll;  
This he would some day paint, the ship at  
night,  
And sleeping seamen tired to the soul,  
The space below the bunks as black as coal,

Gleams upon chests, upon the unlit lamp,  
The ranging door-hook and the locker clamp.

This he would paint, and that, and all these  
scenes,

And proud ships carrying on, and men their  
minds,

And blues of rollers toppling into greens  
And shattering into white that bursts and  
blinds,

And scattering ships running erect like  
hinds,

And men in oilskins beating down a sail  
High on the yellow yard, in snow, in hail,

With faces ducked down from the slanting  
drive

Of half-thawed hail, mixed with half-frozen  
spray,

The roaring canvas like a thing alive,



Shaking the mast, knocking their hands  
away,

The footropes jerking to the tug and sway,  
The savage eyes salt-reddened at the rims  
And icicles on the southwester brims.

And sunnier scenes would grow under his  
brush,

The tropic dawn, with all things dropping  
dew,

The darkness and the wonder and the hush,  
The insensate gray before the marvel grew.  
Then the veil lifted from the trembling  
blue,

The walls of sky burst in, the flower, the rose,  
All the expanse of heaven a mind that  
glows.

He turned out of his bunk; the cook still  
tossed,

One of the other two spoke in his sleep,

A cockroach scuttled where the moonbeam  
crossed ;

Outside there was the ship, the night, the  
deep.

“It is worth while,” the youth said ; “I will  
keep

To my resolve. I’ll learn to paint all this.  
My Lord! my God! how beautiful it is!”

Outside was the ship’s rush to the wind’s  
hurry,

A resonant wire-hum from every rope,  
The broadening bow-wash in a fiery flurry,  
The leaning masts in their majestic slope,  
And all things strange with moonlight : filled  
with hope

By all that beauty going as man bade  
He turned and slept in peace. Eight bells  
were made.

## II

Next day was Sunday, his free painting day,  
While the fine weather held, from eight till  
eight ;

He rose when called at five and did array  
The roundhouse gear and set the kit bags  
straight.

Then, kneeling down like housemaid at a  
grate,

He scrubbed the deck with sand until his  
knees

Were blue with dye from his wet dungarees.

He swabbed the deck with clouts till it was  
dry,

Ranged straight the chests, scrubbed where  
the chests had lain,

Roused out the lockers where the whack-  
pots lie,

Wiped all the tins and put them back  
again.

Scrubbed at the lamp-room deck with might  
and main

To get the oil stains out, then cleaned his  
lamps,

Smoked by the night's affairs, greened by its  
damps.

Soon all was clean, his Sunday tasks were  
done,

His day was clear for painting as he  
chose,

The wetted decks were drying in the sun ;  
The men coiled up, or swabbed, or sought  
repose.

The drifts of silver arrows fell and rose  
As flying fish took wing and skimmed and  
dipped.

A man poured buckets on the bosun stripped.

Eight bells were made. The painter went  
below.

"Now, Dauber, where's the breakfast?"  
said his mates.

"Now don't stand staring; take the kettle,  
go.

You like to have your loaf, whoever waits."  
He fetched the kettle and the kid of cates,  
Coffee and burgoo specked with many a  
weevil.

"You're always last," the cook growled,  
looking evil.

Next, at the meal, the bosun eyed the deck.

"Who cleaned the house out?" "Dauber."

"So I guessed.

I want this floor made white without a  
speck.

Look there by Sails and see the way you've  
messed;

All tide-marks where you let the water rest :  
You've scrubbed in strips and left the space  
    between,  
And now you'll get a stone and sweat it  
    clean."

Then Chips began: "Now, Dauber," he  
    began,  
"We only tell you this for your own good.  
A man at sea has got to be a man  
Or do without man's treatment and man's  
    food.

We won't have dirt : let that be understood,  
Neither in you nor here." "No," said the  
    Cook,

"The Dauber hasn't washed his hands yet ;  
    look.

"Look at his hands, all oil still to the wrists.  
Why do you come to breakfast with such  
    hands ?

Bringing our breakfast, too, in dirty fists,  
Marking my kids: look here at Dauber's  
brands."

The bosun spoke: "I've been in some com-  
mands.

They'd scrub a man for dirt like that,"  
he said;

"Stripped bare, with sand and canvas, in  
the head."

Sails spoke again: "Dauber," he said,  
"you strip.

Unless you're clean we'll sand-and-canvas  
you.

If one man goes he gives it to the ship.  
So what the crowd does every one must do.  
So strip and scrub or we shall learn you to  
With the fore-brace: now do it. Cleanli-  
ness

Before burgoo, and painting, too, I guess."

“That’s you,” said all. The Dauber stripped  
and soaped ;

His messmates eyed his points and mocked  
his build :

His scraggy neck, his shoulders steeply  
sloped,

His ribs all sunken in, his chest unfilled,

His arms like stalks, his little hands un-  
skilled

To strangle sail in snow squalls off the Horn ;  
And all the rest that shouldn’t have been  
born.

So precious time was wasted, bell by bell,  
Before the washing and the breakfast ended,  
The artist’s leisure which the wise gods  
sell

Only for life paid down and spirit spendend.  
The clipper hove her bows out and de-  
scended.



Bright span the bubbles on that glittering  
sea.

The Dauber swept the crumbs up and was  
free.

Free for two hours and more to tingle deep,  
Catching a likeness in a line or tint,  
The canvas running up in a proud sweep,  
Wind-wrinkled at the clews and white like  
lint,

The glittering of the blue waves into glint.  
Free to attempt it all, the proud ship's  
pawings,

The sea, the sky : he went to fetch his draw-  
ings.

Up to the deck-house top he quickly  
climbed ;

He stooped to find them underneath the  
boat.

He found them all obliterated, slimed,  
Blotted, erased, gone from him line and note.  
They were all spoiled; a lump came in  
his throat,  
Being vain of his attempts and tender  
skinned.  
Beneath the light the watching reefers  
grinned.

The knives had made some of the canvas  
rough,  
Spoiling the surface for a new endeavour.  
Three were so spoiled, the rest were good  
enough,  
Though all they once had borne was gone  
for ever.  
“Ah, I suppose,” he said, “they think that  
clever :  
It’s easy to destroy ; doing’s the pain :  
Now I shall have to do them all again.”

He clambered down, holding the ruined things.

"Bosun," he called, "look here, did you do these?

Wipe off my paints and cut them into strings

And smear them till you can't tell chalk from cheese.

Don't stare, but did you do it? Answer, please."

The bosun turned. "I'll give you a thick ear.

Do it? I didn't. Get to hell from here.

"I touch your stinking daubs? The Dauber's daft."

A crowd was gathering now to hear the fun,

The reefers tumbled out, the men laid aft,

The cook blinked, cleaning a mess-kid in  
the sun ;

“What’s up with Dauber now ?” said every-  
one.

“Someone has spoiled my drawings, look  
at this.”

“Well, that’s a dirty trick, by God it is.”

“It is,” said Sam, “a low-down dirty trick  
To spoil a fellow’s work in such a way,  
And if you catch him, Dauber, punch him  
sick,

For he deserves it, be he who he may.”

A seaman shook his old head, wise and gray.

“It seems to me,” he said, “who ain’t no  
judge,

Them drawings look much better now  
they’re smudge.”

“I think the same,” said Cook ; “and I,”  
said Sails,

"Not that that's consolation, but it's true.  
You find the man and cut him into  
wales;

I would, I tell you flat, if I were you."

"When was it done?" "Last night." "I  
wonder who.

The three mates look suspicious, don't they,  
fellows?

It might be them, or is the old man  
jealous?"

"Where were they, Dauber?" "On the  
deck-house." "Where?"

"Under the long boat, in a secret place."

"The blackguard must have watched you  
put them there.

He is a swine. I tell him to his face.

I didn't think we'd anyone so base."

"Nor I," said Dauber. "There was six  
weeks' time

Just wasted in these drawings; it's a  
crime."

"Well, don't you say we did it," growled  
his mates.

"And as for crime, be damned, the things  
were smears,

Best overboard, like you, with shot for  
weights.

Thank God they're gone, and now go shake  
your ears."

The Dauber listened, very near to tears;

"Dauber, if I were you," said Sam again,

"I'd aft, and see the captain, and com-  
plain."

A sigh came from the assembled seamen  
there.

Would he be such a fool for their delight

As go to tell the captain? Would he dare?

And would the thunder roar, the lightning  
smite?

There was the captain come to take a  
sight,

Handling his sextant by the chart house  
aft.

The Dauber turned, the seamen thought  
him daft.

The captain took his sights, a mate  
below

Noted the times; they shouted to each  
other,

The captain quick with "Stop," the answer  
slow,

Repeating slowly one height, then another:  
The swooping clipper stumbled through the  
smother,

The ladder-brasses in the sunlight burned.

The Dauber waited till the captain turned.

Under the jigger-staysail, hat in hand,  
Head bent, as fits a suppliant out at sea,  
He waited for dismissal or command,  
As much alone as any man can be.

The mate was aft about the log, or he  
Would have dismissed him forward, no word  
said ;

The captain eyed the trim and turned his  
head.

There stood the Dauber, humbled to the  
bone,

Waiting as though to speak ; he let him  
wait,

Glanced at the course and called in even  
tone,

“What is the man there wanting, Mr.  
Mate?”

The logship clattered on the grating  
straight,



The reel rolled to the scuppers with a  
clatter,

The mate came grim: "Well, Dauber,  
what's the matter?"

"Please, sir, they spoiled my drawings."

"Who did?" "They."

"Who's they?" "I don't quite know, sir."

"Don't quite know, sir?"

Then why are you aft to talk about it, hey?

Whom d'you complain of?" "No one."

"No one?" "No, sir."

"Well, then, go forward till you've found  
them. Go, sir.

If you complain of someone, then I'll see.

Now get to hell and don't come bothering  
me."

"But, sir, they washed them off and some  
they cut.

Look here, sir, how they spoiled them."

"Never mind.

Go shove your head inside the scuttle butt  
And that will make you cooler. You will  
find

Nothing like water when you're mad and  
blind.

Where were the drawings? In your chest  
or where?"

"Under the long boat, sir; I put them  
there."

"Under the long boat, hey? Now mind  
your tip.

I'll have the skids kept clear with nothing  
round them.

The long boat ain't a store in this here ship,  
Lucky for you it wasn't I who found them.  
If I had seen them, Dauber, I'd have  
drowned them.

Now you be warned by this. I tell you  
plain,  
Don't stow your brass-rags under boats  
again.

"Go forward to your berth." The Dauber  
turned.

The listeners down below them winked  
and smiled,

Knowing how red the Dauber's temples  
burned.

Having lost the case about his only child  
His work was done to nothing and defiled,  
And there was no redress: the captain's  
voice

Spoke, and called "Painter," making him  
rejoice.

The captain and the mate conversed to-  
gether.

“Drawings, you tell me, Mister?” “Yes,  
sir, views:

Wiped off with turps, I gather that’s his  
blether.

He says they’re things he can’t afford to lose.  
He’s Dick, who came to sea in dancing  
shoes

And found the dance a bear dance. They  
were hidden

Under the long boat’s chocks, which I’ve  
forbidden.”

“Wiped off with turps?” The captain  
sucked his lip.

“Who did it, Mister?” “Reefers, I sup-  
pose.

Them devils do the most pranks in a  
ship;

The roundhouse might have done it, cook  
or bouse.”

“I can’t take notice of it till he knows.  
How does he do his work?” “Well, no  
offence;  
He tries; he does his best. He’s got no  
sense.”

“Painter,” the captain called; the Dauber  
came.

“What’s all this talk of drawings? What’s  
the matter?”

“They spoiled my drawings, sir.” “Well,  
who’s to blame?”

The long boat’s there for no one to get at  
her;

You broke the rules, and if you choose to  
scatter

Gear up and down where it’s no right to  
be

And suffer as result, don’t come to  
me.

“Your place is in the roundhouse, and  
your gear

Belongs where you belong. Who spoiled  
your things?

Find out who spoiled your things and fetch  
him here.”

“But, sir, they cut the canvas into strings.”

“I want no argument nor questionings.  
Go back where you belong and say no  
more,

And please remember that you’re not on  
shore.”

The Dauber touched his brow and slunk  
away;

They eyed his going with a bitter eye.

“Dauber,” said Sam, “what did the cap-  
tain say?”

The Dauber drooped his head without  
reply.

“Go forward, Dauber, and enjoy your  
cry.”

The mate limped to the rail and conned  
the craft,

“Bosun,” he called: the bosun hurried  
aft.

“What’s this of Dauber’s drawings being  
spoiled?”

The bosun spat. “The come-day-go-day  
fool,

A junk-laid twice-laid hank of left-hand-  
coiled:

The reefers done it last night in the  
cool.

His job’s the minder’s in an infant school;  
Not coming to sea: the reefers done’t at  
night.

They scoffed the lot, and I say serve him  
right.

“He’s always playing hell with paints or  
chalk,

Making some mess or other, or a stink.”

“Right,” said the mate; he turned, re-  
sumed his walk,

Watching the trembling water droop and  
blink.

The topsail sheets would home another link.

He gave the order; the strong-shouldered  
men

Hauled, singing out, belayed, and slouched  
again.

“Well, that,” exclaimed the mate; he eyed  
the trim;

All things were romping full, the Trade  
Wind clouds

Like flocks on the horizon clustered dim;

Black shadows crossed the deck from stays  
and shrouds.



The wavering silver arrows rose in crowds.

“Bosun,” he cried, and when the man drew

near,

“In future see the long-boat skids kept

clear.

“Go round them every night. See round  
the boats.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” said the bosun: all was said.

Two brace blocks piped aloft in different

notes,

The reef points pattered softly overhead.

Softly, but hurrying, too, as children tread,

A hush, a long swift hurry of little feet,

So faint, so sure, the drumming reef points

beat.

The Dauber reached the berth and entered

in.

Much mockery followed after as he went,

And each face seemed to greet him with  
the grin

Of hounds hot following on a creature spent.

“Aren’t you a fool?” each mocking visage  
meant.

“Who did it, Dauber? What did cap-  
tain say?

It is a crime, and there’ll be hell to pay.”

He bowed his head, the house was full of  
smoke,

The Sails was pointing shackles on his  
chest.

“Lord, Dauber, be a man and take a  
joke” —

He puffed his pipe — “and let the matter  
rest.

Spit brown, my son, and get a hairy breast;  
Get shoulders on you at the crojick braces,  
And let this painting business go to blazes.

“What good can painting do to anyone?  
I don’t say never do it; far from that,  
No harm in sometimes painting just for  
fun.

Keep it for fun, and stick to what you’re at.  
Your job’s to fill your bones up and get  
fat,  
Rib up like Barney’s bull and thicken your  
neck,  
Throw paints to hell, boy, you belong on  
deck.”

“That’s right,” said Chips, “it’s downright  
good advice.

Painting’s no good. What good can paint-  
ing do  
Up on a lower topsail stiff with ice,  
With all your little fishhooks frozen blue?  
Painting won’t help you at the weather  
clew

Nor pass your gaskets for you, nor make  
sail;  
Painting's a balmy's job not worth a nail.

"Of course some famous painters do it  
well,  
Make money, too; there's Hogarth did it  
right,  
Who did the Harlot's Progress, that they  
sell  
In Tiger Bay and up in Fan's Delight:  
You'd think the views, perhaps, a bawdy  
sight.

But I was shipmates one time with a mate  
Who said he use't to keep his daughter  
straight.

"And then there's others said to do it  
good  
As well as Hogarth, better, too, but then

Them ducks are born with painting in the  
blood,

They know the business and are famous  
men.

I saw some pictures by them one time when  
I came to London in the *Golden Rose*.

I tell you, Dauber, they were pictures,  
those.

“Like life some of the sheep were, beautiful,  
They stood right out, you could have heard  
them bleat :

But for the glass you could have felt their  
wool,

And count the grass blades underneath their  
feet.

And plums, like real, you could have almost  
eat.

And one called ‘Tragic News,’ a young  
girl sighing.

You'll never paint like them, it's no use  
trying.

"Wasting your time I call it, what you do,  
Getting good paint and canvas slopped and  
messed.

A Chinaman does better ships than you  
For half a dollar in a reefer's chest.

I tell you frankly, drop it, you'd be best  
Drop it before you must, and don't think  
twice.

You'll thank me some day for my good  
advice."

The Dauber did not answer; time was  
passing.

He pulled his easel out, his paints, his  
stool.

The wind was dropping and the sea was  
glassing.

New realms of beauty waited for his rule.  
The draught out of the crojick kept him  
cool.

He sat to paint, alone and melancholy.  
“No turning fools,” the Chips said, “from  
their folly.”

He dipped his brush, and tried to fix a line,  
And then came peace, and gentle beauty  
came,

Turning his spirit's water into wine,  
Lightening his darkness with a touch of  
flame:

O joy of trying for beauty, ever the same,  
You never fail, your comforts never end;  
O balm of this world's way, O perfect  
friend.

There the four leaning spires of canvas  
rose,

Royals and skysails lifting, gently lifting,  
White like the brightness that a great fish  
blows

When billows are at peace and ships are  
drifting :

With mighty jerks that set the shadows  
shifting,

The courses tugged their tethers: a blue  
haze

Drifted like ghosts of flocks come down to  
graze.

There the great skyline made her perfect  
round,

Notched now and then by the sea's deeper  
blue,

A smoke-smutch marked a steamer home-  
ward bound,

The haze wrought all things to intenser  
hue.



In tingling impotence the Dauber drew  
As all men draw, keen to the shaken soul,  
To give a hint that might suggest the  
whole.

A naked seaman washing a red shirt  
Sat at a tub whistling between his teeth;  
Complaining blocks quavered like something  
hurt.

A sailor cut an old boot for a sheath,  
The ship bowed to her shadow-ship beneath  
And little slaps of spray came at the roll  
On to the deck planks from the scupper-  
hole.

He watched it, painting patiently, as paints  
With eyes that pierce behind the blue sky's  
veil

The Benedictine in a Book of Saints  
Watching the passing of the Holy Grail,

The green dish dripping blood, the trump,  
the hail,  
The spears that pass, the memory and the  
passion,  
The beauty moving under this world's  
fashion.

The reefers watched him from the deck-  
house top,

Eager lest any rope should be mislaid,  
Or grubbing under boats for yarns to drop  
On to the colours on his palette 'splayed:  
Many a mock, many a jest they made.  
"Is it a ship he's doing?" "Ask him."

"No,  
That's not a ship, Dick; it's a raree show."

He painted on, not caring, hardly hearing,  
He breathed another air within his brain,  
He saw the image of his thought appearing,

His minute's power made his pathway plain.  
He was achieving now, he would attain  
Past peak and stopping place on art's slow  
    rise  
To miracles of ships and seas and skies.

## III

They lost the Trades soon after ; then came  
    calm,  
Light little gusts and rain, which soon in-  
    creased  
To glorious northers shouting out a psalm  
At seeing the bright blue water silver-fleeced.  
Horn-wards she rushed, trampling the seas  
    to yeast ;  
There fell a rain-squall in a blind day's  
    end,  
When for an hour the Dauber found a  
    friend

Out of the rain the voices called and passed,  
The staysails flogged, the tackle yanked and  
shook ;

Inside the harness-room a lantern cast  
Light and wild shadows as it ranged its  
hook.

The watch on deck was gathered in the  
nook.

They had taken shelter in that secret place ;  
Wild light gave wild emotions to each face.

One beat the beef-cask and the others sang  
A song that had brought anchors out of  
seas

In ports where bells of Christians never  
rang,

Nor any sea-mark blazed among the trees.  
By forlorn swamps, in ice, by windy keys,  
That song had sounded ; now it shook the  
air

From these eight wanderers brought together there.

Under the poop-break, sheltering from the rain,

The Dauber sketched some likeness of the room,

A note to be a prompting to his brain,

A spark to make old memory re-illuminate.

"Dauber," said someone near him in the gloom,

"How goes it, Dauber?" It was reefer Si.

"There's not much use in trying to keep dry."

"No," said the Dauber. "What you doing?" "Drawing . . .

Drawing the watch in there." "A jolly crowd. . . .

They're always having sing-songs or else  
jawing.

If I could paint like you, Daub, I'd be proud.  
The mate's just overhead, so don't talk loud.  
I'd like to paint like you. Sit down and talk.  
The deck's too swimming wet to take a  
caulk."

They sat upon the sail-room doorway coam-  
ing;

The lad held forth like youth; the Dauber  
listened

To how the boy had had a taste for roam-  
ing,

And what the sea is said to be and isn't.

Where the dim lamplight fell the wet deck  
glistened;

Si said the Horn was still two weeks away.

"But tell me, Dauber, where d'you hail  
from? Eh?"

The rain blew past and let the stars appear,  
The seas grew larger as the moonlight grew,  
For half an hour the ring of heaven was  
clear,

Dusty with moonlight, grey rather than  
blue;

In that great moon the showing stars were  
few.

The sleepy time-boy's feet passed overhead.  
"I come from out past Gloucester," Dauber  
said.

"Not far from Pauntley, if you know those  
parts;

The place is Spital Farm near Silver Hill,  
Above a traphatch where a mill stream  
starts.

We had the mill once, but we've stopped the  
mill.

My dad and sister keep the farm on still.

We're only tenants, but we've rented there,  
Father and son, for over eighty year.

“My granddad had it first, as a young man,  
During Napoleon's wars, oh, years ago.

Farming was rich man's work when he be-  
gan,

And he could farm; he made the corn to  
grow,

He cropped on bits we wouldn't even sow.  
There were big profits then on breadstuffs;  
he

Had thirty acres corn where we have three.

“I've heard my father say that grandfer  
said

That when he first began and 'tended fairs,  
The farmers' ordinaries, where they fed,  
Would charge the men a guinea each for  
chairs,



And fiddlers came, all dinner, playing airs,  
And all men drank champagne. That  
would seem strange  
In farmers' inns to-day after Exchange.

“ Well, grandfer had the farm until he died.  
He held it sixty years from the same squire,  
He saw great changes in that country-  
side,  
And miles of cornland go again to mire,  
And men, who'd drunk champagne, without  
a fire,  
For corn came down to nothing with a  
run  
And never rose after the wars were done.

“ Father was born the year the riots were  
In Bristol, so he says; my grandma said  
That when they burnt the town she saw the  
glare,

Making the sky at midnight deep dull  
red.

She saw it kindling as she lay in bed  
Just after dad was born, dad in the cot,  
And nurse beside her snoring like a sot.

“Father has worked the farm since grandfer  
went;

It means the world to him, I can't think  
why.

They bleed him to the last half-crown for  
rent,

And this and that have almost milked him  
dry.

The land's all starved; if he'd put money  
by,

And corn was up and rent was down two-  
thirds. . . .

But then they aren't, so what's the use of  
words?

“Yet all the same it means the world to  
him,  
The Spital Farm that he and grandfer  
made;  
They’ve given their lives to bring it into  
trim,  
They’ve worn out many a plough and many  
a spade,  
And worked a many a cart-horse to a jade,  
Dragging the waggons off the empty field;  
It’s his life’s fight; he doesn’t like to yield.

“And then his life’s been spent there, man  
and boy;  
He courted mother there, and lived there  
after.  
He’s had his sixty years there, and his  
joy;  
He’s had his happy blessings and his laugh-  
ter.

He cut our names and grandfer's on a  
rafter.

He hopes his children's names, when he is  
cold,

Will fill the rafter full as it will hold.

“He couldn't bear to see the Spital pass  
To strangers, or to think a time would  
come

When other men than us would mow the  
grass,

And other names than ours have the home.  
Some sorrows come from evil thought, but  
some

Come when two men are near and both are  
blind

To what is generous in the other's mind.

“My mother came from under Meon Hill;  
She died when I was only ten, poor woman!

I know my memory of her's living still,  
And will, I hope, as long as I'm a human.  
For no man had a mother like her, no man.  
She wasn't like my father: rose and oak.  
It wasn't marriage, but the Devil's joke.

“I was the only boy, and father thought  
I'd farm the Spital after he was dead,  
And many a time he took me out and taught  
About manures and seed-corn white and  
red,  
And soils and hops; but I'd an empty head.  
Harvest or seed, I would not do a turn;  
I loathed the farm, I didn't want to learn.

“After my mother died, when I was ten,  
I went about more while the work was  
doing,  
And, being a boy, I liked to help the men,  
And taste the pomace at the cider screwing,

And ride the plough team to the forge for  
shoeing,

Or pick in hop yard, but I would not do  
The harder lessons father set me to.

“And when he tried to teach me how to  
plough,

I wanted him to tell me how the earth  
Nourished the seed-corn in the dark, and  
how

The sun and rain could give the green grass  
birth,

And why there was no remedy for dearth,  
And such-like simple questionings; but  
when

He tried to tell, I was for ploughing then.

“He did not mind at first, he thought it  
youth

Feeling the collar, and that I should change;

Then time gave him some inklings of the  
truth,

And that I loathed the farm and wished to  
range.

Truth to a man of fifty's always strange;  
It was most strange and terrible to him;  
It took his lamp just when his light grew  
dim.

“Yet still he hoped the Lord might change  
my mind.

I'd see him bridle-in his wrath and hate,  
And almost break my heart he was so kind,  
Biting his lips sore with resolve to wait.  
And then I'd try awhile: but it was Fate:  
I didn't want to learn; the farm to me  
Was mire and hopeless work and misery.

“Though there were things I loved about it,  
too,

The beasts, the apple trees, and going  
haying,

And then I tried; but no, it wouldn't do,  
The farm was prison and my thoughts were  
straying.

And there'd come father, with his grey  
head, praying.

'Oh my dear son, don't let the Spital pass:  
It's my old home, boy, where your grandfer  
was.

“ ‘And now you won't learn farming; you  
don't care;

The old home's nought to you. I've tried  
to teach you,

I've begged Almighty God, boy, all I dare,  
To use His hand if word of mine won't  
reach you.

Boy, for your grandfer's sake I do beseech  
you,



Don't let the Spital pass to strangers.

Squire

Has said he'd give it you if we require.

“Your mother used to walk here, boy,  
with me;

It was her favourite walk down to the  
mill,

And there we'd talk how little death would  
be

Knowing our work was going on here still.  
You've got the brains, you only want the  
will.

Don't disappoint your mother and your  
father.

I'll give you time to travel, if you'd rather.'

“It wasn't travelling, though, that filled my  
mind;

I could forget the farm by wandering out,

Tracing the little brooks and trying to  
find

A gravelly stretch with belly-rubbing trout.  
Or, trickling from a dock-leaf in the spout,  
Beside some lonely cottage up the hill,  
The source of waters that would turn our  
mill.

“That’s what I loved, water, and time to  
read.

Then I’d come home to sister’s nagging  
tongue,

Saying my sin made father’s heart to  
bleed,

And how she feared she’d live to see me  
hung.

And then she’d read me bits from Dr.  
Young,

And supper would begin, and sister Jane  
Would fillip dad till dad began again.

“I’ve been here all my life, boy. I was  
born

Up in the room above, looks on the mead;  
I never thought you’d cockle my clean corn  
And leave the old home to a stranger’s seed.  
Father and I have made here ’thout a weed:  
We’ve give our lives to make that. Eighty  
years.

And now I go down to the grave in tears.’

“And then I’d get ashamed and take off  
coat,

And work maybe a week, ploughing or sow-  
ing,

And then I’d creep away and sail my  
boat,

Or watch the water when the mill was  
going.

That’s my delight, to be near water flow-  
ing,

Dabbling or sailing boats or jumping stanks  
Or finding moorhens' nests along the banks.

“Then dad would catch me come away from  
work,

Going along the water, watching things,  
And lose his temper, p'raps, and call me  
shirk,

And then we'd words, and tears, and par-  
donings,

And then I'd work, until the brooks and  
springs

Drew me away again to my heart's joy.

I did love being by water as a boy.

“One day my father found a ship I'd built ;  
He took the cart whip to me over that,  
And I, half mad with pain and sick with  
guilt,

Went up and hid in what we called the flat :

A dusty hole given over to the cat ;  
She kittened there, the kittens had worn  
    paths  
Among the cobwebs, dust, and broken  
    laths.

“ So there I blubbered in the dust awhile,  
With bits of plaster dropping in my eyes.  
And then the little kittens made me smile,  
They were so cunning planning a surprise.  
There was a hole with sunlight full of flies,  
And they'd come creeping up and pounce  
    and miss,  
And I got interested, watching this.

“ And putting down my hand between the  
    beams  
I felt a leathery thing and pulled it clear ;  
A book with white cocoons stuck in the  
    seams ;

The spiders had had nests there many a  
year.

It was my mother's sketch-book ; hid, I fear,  
Out of my father's sight : he couldn't bear  
For her to do a thing he couldn't share.

“There were her drawings, done when she  
was a girl,

Before she knew what sorrow was, or dad ;  
Before she put her front hair out of curl ;  
She'd leisure then for drawing, mother had.  
She'd hid them in the roof like something  
bad,

Something she dare not show or felt a  
shame of,

For fear of being chid or made a game of.

“That was a find for me, that was a  
treasure,

I didn't heed my cart-whip weals a scrap.

And most the valley pictures gave me  
    pleasure,  
With fields like counties in a printed map,  
Or Bredon Hill in cloud wearing his cap,  
Or Meon (where she played), or Sheepey  
    Top,  
Or sunny hayfields full of clover cop.

“And one of Bristol. On her wedding-  
    day  
They went to Bristol by the Gloucester  
    mail,  
And father sparked her out to see the play,  
Maria’s Necklace and the Winter’s Tale.  
There was the yellow playbill withered  
    pale,  
Stuck in the book, and then a sketch she  
    did  
Before she stopped being Queen or father  
    chid.

“ There were the dates upon them, pencilled  
faint ;

March was the last one, eighteen sixty-  
three,

Unfinished, that, for tears had smeared the  
paint ;

The rest was landscape not yet brought to  
be.

That was a holy afternoon to me,  
That book a sacred book, the flat a place  
Where I could meet my mother face to  
face.

“ It was my secret room from that time on.

O many a golden time I spent up there.

Father and sister wondered where I'd gone,

But I was in the cobwebs, in my lair,

And through the peephole letting in the air

I could command the valley at a look

And draw it on a blank page in the book.



“And after that drawing became my joy.  
I cared for nothing else. I drew, I drew  
Faster than dad or sister could destroy,  
For everything I saw I tried to do.  
To see the thing distinct and get it true,  
And catch the very motion, as when grass  
Or corn is ruffled when the flurries pass.

“That was my aim: I worked at that, I  
    toiled,  
And every penny I could get I spent  
On paints, crayons, or paper which I spoiled  
Up in the attic to my heart's content,  
Till one day father asked me what I meant;  
The time had come, he said, to make an end;  
Now it must finish: what did I intend?

“Either I took to farming, like his son,  
In which case he would teach me, early and  
    late

(Provided that my daubing mood was done)  
Or I must go: it must be settled straight.  
If I refused to farm: there was the gate.  
I was to choose, his patience was all gone;  
The present state of things could not go on.

“Sister was there, she eyed me while he  
spoke,  
The kitchen clock ran down and struck the  
hour,  
And something told me father’s heart was  
broke,  
For all he stood so set and looked so sour.  
Jane took a duster and began to scour  
A pewter on the dresser; she was crying.  
I stood stock still a long time, not reply-  
ing.

“‘Well, Joe,’ said Dad, ‘which is it going  
to be?’

He waited; I said nothing; the clock  
ticked;

The cat with half-closed eyes purred at us  
three;

The wagging corner of the duster flicked.

I felt like a traitor in a story, tricked,

My secret writings found, my plots laid  
bare,

And my king come for me to answer there.

“Dad waited, then he snorted and turned  
round,

‘Well, think of it,’ he said; he left the  
room.

His boots went clop along the stony  
ground

Out to the orchard and the apple bloom.

A cloud came over the sun and made a  
gloom.

I swallowed with dry lips; then sister turned.

She was dead white but for her eyes that  
burned.

“‘You’re breaking father’s heart, Joe,” she  
began.

‘It’s not as if . . .’ she checked, in too much  
pain.

“O Joe, don’t help to kill so fine a man.  
You’re giving him our mother over again.  
It’s wearing him to death, Joe, heart and  
brain.

You know what store he sets on leaving this  
To (it’s too cruel)—to a son of his.

“‘Yet you go painting all the day. Oh,  
Joe,

Couldn’t you make an effort? Can’t you  
see

What folly it is of yours? It’s not as  
though

You are a genius or could ever be.  
Oh, Joe, for father's sake, if not for me  
Give up this craze for painting and be  
wise,  
And work with father, where your duty lies.'

“‘It goes too deep,’ I said; ‘I loathe the  
farm;  
I couldn't help, even if I'd the mind.  
Even if I helped I'd only do him harm.'  
Father would see it if he were not blind.  
I was not built to farm, as he would find.  
Oh, Jane, it's bitter hard to stand alone,  
And spoil my father's life or spoil my  
own.’

“‘Spoil both,’ she said, ‘the way you're  
shaping now.  
You're only a boy not knowing your own  
good.

Where will you go, suppose you leave here?  
how

Do you propose to earn your daily food?  
Draw? Daub the pavements? There's a  
feckless brood

Goes to the devil daily, Joe, in cities  
Only from thinking how divine their wit is.

“‘Clouds are they, without water, carried  
away,

And you'll be one of them, the way you're  
going,

Daubing at silly pictures all the day  
And praised by silly fools who're always  
blowing.

And you choose this when you might go  
a-sowing,

Casting the good corn into chosen mould  
That shall in time bring forth a hundred-  
fold.'

“So we went on, but in the end, it ended.

I felt I'd done a murder, I felt sick.

There's much in human minds cannot be  
mended,

And that, not I, played dad a cruel trick.

There was one mercy: that it ended quick.

It did not drag along through years of  
care,

Spoiling our lives and ending in despair.

“And then I joined my mother's brother:  
he

Kept school at Braddoclode by Severn  
stream;

A man so broken down by misery

His life went by him in a kind of dream.

But sometimes in his eyes there'd come a  
gleam

Remembering one he'd loved there years  
before,

Drowned by the tide, poor woman, off the  
shore.

“And there I learned house-painting for a  
living;

I'd have been happy there, but that I knew  
I'd sinned before my father past forgiving,  
And that they sat at home, that silent two,  
Wearing the fire out and the evening  
through,

Silent, defeated, broken, in despair,  
My plate unset, my name gone, and my  
chair.

“Sitting and hardly talking: father think-  
ing

How when he died the auctioneers would sit  
Blue-pencilling their lists where he sat;  
drinking,

Marking the sales or knocking off to spit.



The glass would be all broke, the grate  
unlit,  
The beasts gone from the barton: auction  
bills  
Stuck on the trees or hung from window-  
sills.

“And boot-marks and cigar-ends on the  
grass,  
And the old name gone from the ancient  
hold,  
And none but Jane to see the Spital  
pass  
To one who had not walked its fields of  
old;  
And strangers there, before his blood was  
cold  
Down in the grave, changing his old routine,  
Putting the tallat where the oasts had  
been.

“I saw all that ; and sister Jane came white,  
White as a ghost, with fiery weeping eyes,  
I saw her all day long and half the night,  
Bitter as gall, and passionate and wise.

‘Joe, you have killed your father : there  
he lies.

You have done your work, you with our  
mother’s ways.’

She said it plain, and then her eyes would  
blaze.

“And then one day I had a job to do,  
Down below bridge, by where the docks  
begin ;

And there I saw a clipper towing through  
The open gates ; she was just entering in.  
Raked to the nines she was, lofty and thin,  
A skysail-yarded clipper so well kept  
She glistened like a racehorse as she  
stepped.

“That altered life for me; I had never  
seen

A ship before, for all my thought of ships;  
And there was this great clipper like a  
queen,

With a white curl of bubbles at her lips,  
All made of beauty to the stern's ellipse,  
Her ensign ruffling red, her bunts in pile,  
Beauty and strength together, wonder, style.

“She docked close to the gates and there  
she lay

Over the stream from me, but well in sight.  
And as I worked I watched her all the day,  
Finding her beauty ever fresh delight.

Her house-flag was bright green with strips  
of white;

High in the sunny air it rose to shake  
Above the skysail poles' most splendid  
rake.

“For six weeks more I was kept painting  
there

Down below bridge, where all the river’s  
salt,

And every day her beauty seemed more fair,  
And came more home to make my heart  
exalt.

Her lines, her spiring masts without a fault,  
Her fan of mighty rigging reaching down :  
She was a thing too queenly for a crown.

“I wasn’t happy then ; I felt too keenly  
How hard it is to paint ; but when I saw  
Her masts across the river rising queenly,  
Built out of so much chaos brought to  
law,

I learned the power of knowing how to  
draw,

Of beating thought into the perfect line,  
I vowed to make that power of beauty mine.

“And when I felt unhappy I would look  
Over the river at her, and her pride,  
So calm, so quiet, came as a rebuke  
To half the passionate pathways which I  
tried.

And though the green leaves browned and  
brown leaves died,  
And dead leaves fell and cold November  
came,  
She was still splendid there, and still the  
same.

“Then on a day she sailed; but when she  
went

My mind was clear on what I had to try;  
To see the sea and ships and what they  
meant.

That was the thing I longed to do; so I  
Drew and worked hard and studied, and  
put by,

And thought of nothing else but that one  
end,  
But let all else go hang : love, money, friend.

“And now I’ve shipped as Dauber I’ve be-  
gun.

It was hard work to find a dauber’s berth.  
I hadn’t any friends to find me one ;  
Only my skill, for what it may be worth.  
But I’m at sea now, going about the earth,  
And when the ship’s paid off, when we re-  
turn,  
I’ll join some Paris studio and learn.

“I shan’t be much too old to join a school.  
I want to learn my craft ; I want to  
show  
Father and sister that I’m not a fool,  
And that the world has thought me wise  
to go.

It makes my heart ache thinking of them,  
    though,  
For even if my painting made a blaze,  
They'd think me sinner still; they would  
    not praise."

He stopped, the air came moist; Si did not  
    speak;  
The Dauber turned his eyes to where he  
    sat,  
Pressing the sail-room hinges with his  
    cheek,  
His face half covered with a drooping  
    hat.  
Huge dewdrops from the staysails dropped  
    and spat.  
Si did not stir, the Dauber touched his  
    sleeve,  
A little birdlike noise came from a  
    sheave.

Si was asleep, sleeping a calm, dead sleep ;  
Still as a warden of the Egyptian dead,  
In some old haunted temple buried deep  
Under the desert sand sterile and red.

The Dauber shook his arm. Si jumped,  
and said,

“Good yarn, I swear. I say, you have a  
brain ;

Was that eight bells that went?” he slept  
again.

One bell was struck ; one bell. The watch  
was called.

A match flared in the half-deck and went  
out.

Forward, within the fo’c’s’le, someone  
bawled,

The reefer in the half-deck raised his shout.  
Each sleeper slowly roused, blinked like a  
lout,



Cursed, fumbled for his pipe in sleep's  
thick fog,

And then relapsed, dead heavy, like a log.

Si rubbed his eyes: "I've had a nap," he  
said.

"Was that one bell? What, Dauber, you  
still here?"

"Si, there," the mate's voice called from  
overhead.

The order made the lad's thick vision  
clear;

A something in the mate's voice made  
him fear.

"Si," said the mate, "I hear you've made  
a friend;

Dauber, in short. That friendship's got  
to end.

"You're a young gentleman. Your place  
aboard

Is with the gentlemen, abaft the mast,  
You're learning to command; you can't  
afford

To yarn with any man. But there . . .  
It's past.

You've done it once; let this time be the  
last.

The Dauber's place is forward. Do it  
again,

I'll put you bunking forward with the  
men.

"Dismiss." Si went; but Sam, beside the  
mate,

Time-keeper there, walked with him to the  
rail

And whispered him the menace of "You  
wait";

Words which have turned full many a reefer  
pale.

The watch was changed : the watch on deck  
trimmed sail.

Sam, going below, called all the reefers  
down,

Sat in his bunk, and eyed them with a  
frown.

“Si, here,” he said, “has spoiled the half-  
deck’s name,

Talking to Dauber — Dauber, the ship’s  
clout.

A reefer takes the Dauber for a flame ;  
The half-deck take the roundhouse walking  
out.

He’s soiled the half-deck’s honour. Now,  
no doubt

The bosun and his mates will come here  
sneaking,

Asking for smokes, or blocking gangways  
speaking.

“I’m not a vain man, given to blow or  
boast ;

I’m not a proud man ; but I truly feel  
That while I’ve bossed this mess and ruled  
this roast

I’ve kept this hooker’s half-deck damned  
genteel.

Si must ask pardon, or be made to squeal.  
Down on your knees, dog ; them we love we  
chasten.

Joa, pasea, my son ; in English, hasten.”

Si begged for pardon, meekly kneeling down  
Before the reefers’ mess assembled grim.

The lamp above them smoked the glass all  
brown ;

Beyond the door the dripping sails were  
dim.

The Dauber passed the door ; none spoke to  
him.

He sought his berth and slept, or, waking,  
heard

Rain on the deck-house ; rain, no other word.

#### IV

The glorious northers lasted from the  
Trades.

They, too, were dropped, and still the ship  
did shoulder

The brilliance of the water's white cockades  
Into the milky green of smoky smoulder,  
The sky grew bluer and the air grew colder ;  
Southward she thundered while the northers  
held,

Proud, with taut bridles, pawing, but com-  
pelled.

And still the Dauber strove, though all men  
mocked,

To draw the splendour of the passing  
thing ;  
And deep inside his heart a something  
locked,  
Long pricking in him, now began to  
sting  
A fear of the disasters storm might bring.  
His rank as painter would be ended then ;  
He would keep watch, and watch like other  
men.

And go aloft high on the yellow yard,  
When the great ship was rolling scuppers  
under,  
Burying her snout all round the compass  
card,  
While the green water struck at her and  
stunned her ;  
When the lee-rigging slacked, when one  
long thunder

Boomed from the black to windward, when  
the sail

Booted and spurred the devil in the gale

For him to ride on men: that was the  
time

The Dauber dreaded; then the test would  
come,

When seas, half-frozen, slushed the decks  
with slime

And all the air was blind with flying  
scum;

When the great sails were furled, when the  
fierce hum

Of the weather rigging died in the great  
roar

Of the southwester never tamed by shore.

He looked aloft. He had once worked aloft,  
Shifting her suits one summer afternoon,

In the bright Trade wind, when the wind  
was soft,

Shaking the points, making the tackle  
croon :

But that was child's play to the future ;  
soon

He would be ordered up when sails and  
spars

Were flying and going mad among the  
stars.

He had been afraid that first time ; daunted,  
thrilled,

Not by the height so much as by the  
size ;

And then the danger to the man unskilled  
In standing on a rope that runs through  
eyes.

“But in a storm,” he thought, “when the  
yards rise



And roll all down together, and snap their  
gear!"

The sweat came cold upon his palms for  
fear.

Even ashore he had sometimes felt a pang,  
Swinging below the house-eaves on a stage;  
But stages carry rails: here he would hang  
Upon a jerking rope in a storm's rage,  
Ducked, that the sheltering oilskin might  
assuage

The beating of the storm, clutching the jack,  
Beating the sail and being beaten back.

Drenched, frozen, gasping, blinded, beaten  
dumb.

High in the night, reeling great blinding  
arcs

As the ship rolled, his chappy fingers numb,  
The deck below a narrow blur of marks,

The sea a welter of whiteness shot with  
sparks  
Now snapping up in bursts, now dying  
away,  
Salting the horizontal snow with spray.

A hundred and thirty feet above the deck,  
And there, while the ship rolls, boldly to  
sit  
Upon a footrope moving, jerk and check,  
While half-a-dozen seamen work on it.  
Held by one hand, straining, by strength  
and wit,  
To toss a gasket's coil around the yard:  
How could he compass that, when blowing  
hard?

And if he failed in any least degree,  
Or faltered for an instant, or showed slack,  
He might go drown himself in the deep sea,

And add seven bubbles to the clipper's  
track.

He had signed his name ; there was no turn-  
ing back,

No pardon for default ; this must be done.  
One iron rule at sea binds everyone.

Till now he had been treated with con-  
tempt,

As neither man nor thing : a creature borne  
On the ship's articles but left exempt  
From all the seamen's life except their  
scorn.

But he would rank as seaman off the Horn ;  
Work as a seaman, and be kept or cast  
By standards set for men before the mast.

Even now they shifted suits of sails ; they  
bent

The storm-suit ready for the expected time.

The mighty norther that the Plate had lent  
Had brought them far into the wintry  
clime.

At dawn, out of the shadow, there was rime ;  
The dim Magellan clouds were frosty clear,  
The wind had edge, the testing time was  
near.

And then he wondered if the tales were lies  
Told by old hands to terrify the new ;  
For, since the ship left England, only twice  
Had there been need to start a sheet or  
clew ;

Then only royals, for an hour or two,  
And no seas broke aboard, nor was it cold.  
What were these gales of which the stories  
told?

The thought went by. He had heard the  
bosun tell

Too often and too fiercely not to know  
That being off the Horn in June is hell;  
Hell of continual toil in ice and snow,  
Wet through for weeks, hearing the wester  
    blow,  
Blow — shriek aloud for weeks. Hear  
    without check  
The thunder of green seas bursting white  
    on deck.

Such was the weather he might look to  
    find,  
Such was the work expected: there re-  
    mained  
Firmly to set his teeth, resolve his mind,  
And be the first, however much it pained,  
And bring his honour round the Horn un-  
    stained  
And win his mates' respect, and thence,  
    untainted,

Be ranked as man, however much he  
painted.

He drew deep breath; a gantline swayed  
aloft

A new lower topsail hard with rope and  
leather,

Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft  
Below the Ramirez in Cape Horn weather,  
The arms upon the yard hove all together,  
Lighting the head along; a thought oc-  
curred

Within the Painter's brain like a bright  
bird.

That this, and so much like it, of man's  
toil

Compassed by naked manhood in strange  
places,

Was all heroic, but outside the coil

Within which modern art gleams or grimaces,

That if he drew that line of sailors' faces  
Sweating the sail, their passionate play and  
change,

It would be new and wonderful and  
strange.

That was what going aloft meant, it would  
be

A training in new vision, a revealing  
Of passionate men in battle with the  
sea

High on an unseen stage shaking and reeling,

And men through him would understand  
their feeling

Their might, their misery, their tragic  
power,

And all by suffering pain a little hour,

High on the yard with them, feeling their  
pain,  
Battling with them; and it had not been  
done.

He was a door to new worlds in the  
brain,

A window opening letting in the sun,  
A voice saying, "Thus is bread fetched and  
ports won,

And life lived out at sea where men  
exist

Solely by man's strong brain and sturdy  
wrist."

Wonders of marvellous pictures touched his  
thought;

He would endure it all, endure and learn,  
Sharing the life till every gleam was caught  
In agony's bitter etchings that so burn.  
Then months of training after his return,



And then the dream fulfilled, the power to  
show

All he had seen and had the power to know.

So he decided as he cleaned his brasses,  
Heading without, aloft, the curse, the shout  
Where the taut gantline passes and re-  
passes

Heaving new topsails to be lighted out.  
It was most proud, however self might  
doubt,

To share man's tragic toil and paint it true.  
He took the offered Fate: this he would do.

That night the snow fell between six and  
seven,

A little feathery fall so light, so dry,  
An aimless dust out of a confused heaven,  
Upon an air no steadier than a sigh,  
The powder dusted down and wandered by,

So purposeless, so many, and so cold,  
Then died and the wind ceased and the  
ship rolled.

Rolled till she clanged, rolled till the brain  
was tired

Marking the acme of the heaves, the pause,  
While the sea-beauty rested and respired.  
Drinking great draughts of roller at her  
hawse.

Flutters of snow came aimless upon flaws.  
"Lock up your paints," the mate said,  
speaking light,  
"This is the Horn; you'll join my watch  
to-night."

## V

All through the windless night the clipper  
rolled

In a great swell with oily gradual heaves

Which rolled her down until her time-bells  
toll'd

Clang, and the weltering water moaned like  
beeves.

The thundering rattle of slatting shook the  
sheaves,

Startles of water made the swing ports  
gush,

The sea was moaning and sighing and say-  
ing "Hush!"

It was all black and starless. Peering  
down

Into the water trying to pierce the gloom,  
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of  
brown

Heaving and dying away and leaving room  
For yet another. Like the march of doom  
Came those great powers of marching  
silences;

Then fog came down, dead cold, and hid  
the seas.

They set the Dauber to the fog-horn.

There

He stood upon the poop, making to sound  
Out of the pump the sailors' nasal blare,  
Listening lest ice should make the note re-  
sound.

She bayed there like a solitary hound  
Lost in a covert, all the watch she bayed ;  
The fog, come closelier down, no answer  
made.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost ;  
The elemental hid her, she was merged  
In mufflings of dark death, like a man's  
ghost  
New to the change of death, yet thither  
urged.

Then from the hidden waters something  
surged

Mournful, despairing, great, greater than  
speech,

A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again, mournful, and  
still

Out of the night that mighty voice arose,  
The Dauber at his fog-horn felt the thrill:  
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms  
were those?

Mournful, from things defeated, in the  
throes

Of memory of some conquered hunting  
ground,

Out of the night of death arose the sound.

“Whales,” said the mate. They stayed  
there all night long,

Answering the horn, out of the night they  
spoke,

Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong  
But were still noble underneath the stroke.  
They filled the darkness when the Dauber  
woke;

The men came peering to the rail to hear  
And the sea sighed and the fog rose up  
sheer,

A wall of nothing at the world's last edge,  
Where no life came except defeated life.  
The Dauber felt shut in within a hedge  
Behind which form was hidden and thought  
was rife,

And that a blinding flash, a thrust, a knife,  
Would sweep the hedge away and make all  
plain,

Brilliant beyond all words, blinding the  
brain.

So the night passed, but then no morning  
broke,

Only a something showed that night was  
dead,

A sea bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,  
And the fog drew away and hung like  
lead:

Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and  
red,

Like glowering gods at watch it did  
appear,

And sometimes drew away and then drew  
near,

Like islands and like chasms and like hell,  
But always mighty and red, gloomy and  
ruddy,

Shutting the visible sea in like a well,  
Slow-heaving in vast ripples blank and  
muddy,

Where the sun should have risen it streaked  
    bloody ;  
The day was still-born ; all the sea-fowl  
    scattering  
Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering,  
    clattering.

Then Polar snow came down little and light,  
Till all the sky was hidden by the small,  
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white  
Tumbling and wavering down and covering  
    all,  
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,  
Furring the ropes with white, casing the  
    mast,  
Coming on no known air, but blowing past.

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,  
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns  
    were blowing



The mort for gods cast out and over-  
thrown,

Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and  
going.

Slow the slow gradual moan came in the  
snowing,

The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.

The snowstorm fluttered by, he saw the  
sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering  
prism

Into another, vaster and more grim,

Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen

To muffle-to a final door on him ;

The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,

The pigeons chattered, quarrelling in the  
track.

In the southwest the dimness dulled to  
black.

Then came the cry of: "Call all hands on deck."

The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:

Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck  
And crumples steel and smites the strong  
man dumb.

Down clattered flying kites and staysails:  
some

Sang out in quick, high calls; the fairleads  
skirled,

And from the southwest came the end of  
the world.

"Caught in her ball dress," said the bosun,  
hauling.

"Lee-ay, lee-ay!" quick, high, came the  
men's call,

It was all wallop of sails and startled call-  
ing:

“Let fly,” “Let go,” “Clue up,” and “Let  
go all,”

“Now up and make them fast.” “Here,  
give us a haul,”

“Now up and stow them. Quick! By  
God, we’re done.”

The blackness crunched all memory of the  
sun.

“Up,” said the mate. “Mizèn topgallants.  
Hurry!”

The Dauber ran, the others ran, the  
sails

Slatted and shook; out of the black a  
flurry,

Whirled in fine lines tattering the edge to  
trails;

Painting and art and England were old  
tales

Told in some other life to that pale man

Who struggled with white fear and gulped  
and ran.

He struck a ringbolt in his haste and fell,  
Rose, sick with pain, half-lamed in his left  
knee

He reached the shrouds, where clambering  
men pell-mell

Hustled each other up and cursed him; he  
Hurried aloft with them: then from the  
sea

Came a cold, sudden breath that made the  
hair

Stiff on the neck as though Death whis-  
pered there.

A man below him punched him in the  
side:

“Get up you, Dauber, or let me get  
past.”

He saw the belly of the skysail skied,  
Gulped, and clutched tight, and tried to go  
more fast ;  
Sometimes he missed his ratline and was  
grassed,  
Scraped his shin raw against the rigid line ;  
The clamberers reached the futtock-shrouds'  
incline.

Cursing they came ; one, kicking out be-  
hind

Kicked Dauber in the mouth, and one below  
Punched at his calves ; the futtock-shrouds  
inclined —

It was a perilous path for one to go.

“Up, Dauber, up !” a curse followed a blow ;  
He reached the top and gasped, then on,  
then on.

And one voice yelled “Let go !” and one  
“All gone !”

Fierce clamberers, some in oilskins, some in  
rags,

Hustling and hurrying up, up the steep  
stairs,

Before the windless sails were blown to flags  
And whirled like dirty birds athwart great  
airs,

Ten men in all, to get this mast of theirs  
Snugged to the gale in time. "Up, damn  
you, run!"

The mizen topmast head was safely won.

"Lay out!" the bosun yelled: the Dauber  
laid

Out on the yard, gripping the yard, and  
feeling

Sick at the mighty space of air displayed  
Below his feet, where mewing birds were  
wheeling;

A giddy fear was on him, he was reeling,

He bit his lip half through, clutching the  
jack;  
A cold sweat glued the shirt upon his  
back.

The yard shook to men's feet, a brace was  
loose,  
He felt that he would fall, he bent, he  
bent,  
Clammy with natural terror to the  
shoes,  
While idiotic promptings came and went.  
Then the great soul of his serene intent  
Came winging warm upon him, like new  
blood,  
Tingling each nerve, making each channel  
good.

To unknown strength, the shock passed, he  
could look

Forward, where, on the main, the skysail  
high,

Though now half smothered, kicked aloft  
and shook

Over the straining heads of Sam and Si.

A whirl of pellets of little snow drove by.

He saw the water darken. Someone yelled :  
"Frap it! don't stay to furl. Hold on!"

He held.

Darkness came down, half darkness, in a  
whirl;

The sky went out, the waters disappeared.

He felt a shocking pressure of blowing hurl

The ship upon her side; the darkness  
speared

At her with wind, she staggered, she  
careered,

Then down she lay, the Dauber felt her  
go,



He saw his yard tilt downwards ; then the  
snow

Whirled all about, dense, multitudinous,  
cold,

Mixed with the wind's one devilish thrust  
and shriek

Which whiffled out men's tears, deafened,  
took hold,

Flattening the flying drift against the cheek.

The yards buckled and bent, man could not  
speak;

The ship lay on her side and the wind's  
sound

Had devilish malice at having got her  
downed.

At the first shock of falling Dauber's feet  
Slid on the rope ; he slid, gripping the jack,  
Till one foot jammed against an iron sheet,

And the iron cap of the topmast propped  
his back,

Then passed a minute of roaring, whirling  
black.

His mate upon the yard yelled in his ear  
"Sail. Cut away. Cut rags." He could  
not hear.

"Cut!" yelled his mate; he looked, the  
sail was gone,

Blown into rags in the first furious squall.  
The tatters drummed the devil's tattoo; on  
The buckling yard a block thumped like  
a mall.

The ship lay, the sea smote her, the wind's  
bawl

Came 'Loo, 'Loo, 'Loo; the Devil cried  
his hounds

On to the poor spent stag strayed in his  
bounds.

“Cut! Ease her!” yelled his mate; the  
Dauber heard.

His mate wormed up the tilted yard and  
slashed,

A rag of canvas skimmed like a darting  
bird.

The snow whirled, the ship bowed to it,  
the gear lashed;

The Dauber left his perch, his sheath  
knife flashed,

His numb hand hacked with it, to clear the  
strips;

The flying ice was salt upon his lips.

The ice was caking on his oilskins; cold  
Struck to his marrow, beat upon him,  
stung.

The chill palsied his blood, it made him old;  
The frosty scatter of death was being flung.  
And still the ship lay over, still he clung,

Tatters of shouts were flung, the rags of  
yells  
And clang, clang, clang, below beat the two  
bells.

Numb with the agony of the cold, he  
looked

Above him at the royal ; there he saw  
The bony finger of the lean spar crooked,  
Bending to leeward like a clutching claw.  
The mast's heel, working, ground its fid-  
hole raw,

Royal and skysail beat in tatters: boys  
Hacked at the rags, and "slat, slat, slat,"  
the noise

Of their frayed, flapping trouser-ends beat,  
beat,  
Beat in the wind, and still they hacked ;  
and he

Hacked on the jerking yard half off his  
feet,

Cutting the scattering rags and tatters free.  
They tied themselves in knots, they had  
such glee

To kick away their masters and to lose  
The iron bonds of their constraining clews.

They cleared the weather-yard. "Now!"  
yelled his mate,

"Go down to leeward and cut away the  
rest."

Slide down the tilted pole, wrestle with  
fate.

Held by the oilskin buttons on his chest,  
The Dauber's turn was come: he did his  
best,

Slid down and cut away. He felt his foot  
Plucked from below; the bosun shook his  
boot.

“Leave that,” the bosun shouted. “Cro-  
jick save.”

The splitting crojick, not yet gone to  
rags,  
Thundered below, beating till something  
gave.

Bellying between its buntlines into bags.  
Some birds were blown past shrieking:  
dark, like shags,  
Their backs seemed, looking down. “’Leu,  
’Leu!” they cried.

The ship lay, the seas thumped her, she had  
died.

They reached the crojick yard, which  
buckled, buckled  
Like a thin whalebone to the topsail’s  
strain ;  
They laid upon the yard and heaved and  
knuckled,

Pounding the sail, which jangled and leapt  
again.

It was quite hard with ice, its rope like  
chain,

Its strength like seven devils, it shook the  
mast;

They cursed and toiled and froze: a long  
time passed.

Two hours passed, then a dim lightening  
came.

Those frozen ones upon the yard could see  
The mainsail and the foresail still the  
same,

Still battling with the hands and blowing  
free,

Rags blew where kites and staysails used  
to be;

The lower topsails stood; the ship's lea  
deck

Creamed with four feet of water filled with  
wreck.

An hour more went by; the Dauber lost  
All sense of hands and feet, all sense of all  
But of a wind that cut him to the ghost  
And of a frozen fold he had to haul,  
Of heavens that fell and never ceased to  
fall

And ran in smoky snatches along the sea,  
Leaping from crest to wave-crest, yelling:  
he

Lost sense of time, no bells went, but he  
felt

Ages go over him. At last, at last  
They frapped the cringled crojick's icy  
pelt;

In frozen bulge and bunt they made it fast.  
Then, scarcely live, they laid in to the mast.



The captain's speaking trumpet gave a  
blare:

"Make fast the topsail, Mister, while you're  
there."

Some seamen cursed, but up they had to  
go,

Up to the topsail yard to spend an hour  
Stowing a topsail in a blinding snow

Which made the strongest man among  
them cower.

More men came up, the fresh hands gave  
them power,

They stowed the sail; then with a rattle  
of chain

One half the crojick burst its bonds again.

\* \* \* \* \*

They stowed the sail, frapping it round  
with rope,

Leaving no surface for the wind, no fold;

Then down the weather shrouds, half dead,  
they grope.

That struggle with the sail had made them  
old ;

They wondered if the crojick furl would  
hold.

“Lucky,” said one, “she didn’t lose a  
spar.”

“Lucky,” the bosun said, “lucky? We  
are.

“She came within two shakes of turning  
top,

Or stripping all her shroud screws, that  
first quiff.

Now, fish those wash-deck buckets out of  
the slop.

Here’s Dauber says he doesn’t like Cape  
Stiff.

This isn’t wind, man, this is only a whiff.

Hold on, all hands; hold on!" a sea, half-  
seen

Paused, mounted, burst and filled the main  
deck green.

The Dauber felt a mountain of water fall.  
It covered him deep, deep, he felt it fill  
Over his head, the deck, the five-rails all,  
Quieting the ship, she trembled and lay  
still.

Then with a rush and shatter and clanging  
shrill,  
Over she went; he saw the water cream  
Over the bits; he saw the half-deck  
stream.

Then in the rush he swirled, over she  
went,  
Her lee rail dipped, he struck, and some-  
thing gave.

His legs went through a port as the roll  
spent;

She paused, then rolled, and back the water  
drave,

He drifted with it as a part of the wave;  
Half-drowned, half-stunned, exhausted,  
partly frozen,

He struck the booby hatchway; then the  
bosun

Leaped, seeing his chance, before the next  
sea burst

And caught him as he drifted, seized him,  
held,

Up-ended him against the bitts and cursed.

"This ain't the George's Swimming Baths,"  
he yelled,

"Keep on your feet," another gray-back  
felled

The two together, and the bose, half-blind,

Spat: "One's a joke," he cursed, "but  
two's unkind."

"Now, damn it, Dauber," said the mate,  
"look out,

Or you'll be over the side." The water  
freed,

Each clanging freeing-port became a  
spout.

The men cleared up the decks, as there  
was need;

The Dauber coiled up with them, feeling  
bleed

His head into his oilskins; the sky glow-  
ered,

The wind shrieked, and the mile-long gray-  
backs towered.

It was fast darkening, but the ship was  
saved,

She was snugged down, though fourteen  
sails were split.

Out of the dark a fiercer fury raved :

The gray-backs died and mounted, each  
crest lit

With a white toppling gleam that hissed  
from it

And slid, or leaped, or ran with whirls of  
cloud,

Mad with inhuman life that shrieked  
aloud.

The watch was called: Dauber might go  
below.

“Splice the main brace,” the mate called;  
all laid aft

To get a gulp of momentary glow

As some reward for having saved the craft.

The steward ladled mugs from which each  
quaffed

Whisky, with water, sugar and lime juice,  
hot,  
A quarter of a pint each made the tot.

Beside the lamp-room door the steward  
stood

Ladling it out, and each man came in turn,  
Tipped his sou'wester, drank it, grunted  
"Good,"

And shambled forward, letting it slowly  
burn.

When all were gone the Dauber lagged  
astern,

Torn by his frozen body's lust for heat,  
The liquor's pleasant smell, so warm, so  
sweet,

And by a promise long-since made at  
home

Never to taste strong liquor; now he knew

The worth of liquor, now he wanted some;  
His frozen body urged him to the brew.

Yet it seemed wrong, an evil thing to do  
To break that promise. "Dauber," said  
the mate,

"Drink and turn in, man; why the hell  
d'ye wait?"

"Please, sir, I'm temperance." "Temper-  
ance are you, hey?"

That's all the more for me; so you're for  
slops?

I thought you'd had enough slops for to-  
day.

Go to your bunk and ease her when she  
drops.

And . . . dammy, steward, you brew with  
too much hops. . . .

Stir up the sugar, man . . . and tell your  
girl



How kind the mate was teaching you to  
furl."

Then the mate drank the remnants, six  
men's share,

And ramped into his cabin, where he  
stripped

And danced unclad and was uproarious  
there.

In waltzes with the cabin-cat he tripped,  
Singing in tenor clear that he was pipped,  
That "he who strove the tempest to dis-  
arm

Must never first embrail the lee yard-  
arm,"

And that his name was Ginger. Dauber  
crept

Back to the roundhouse, gripping by the  
rail.

The wind howled by, the passionate water  
leapt,

The night was all one roaring with the  
gale.

Then at the door he stopped, uttering a  
wail,

His hands were perished numb and blue as  
veins,

He could not turn the knob for both the  
Spains.

A hand came shuffling aft, dodging the  
seas,

Singing "Her nut brown hair" between  
his teeth,

Taking the ocean's tumult at his ease,  
Even when the wash about his thighs did  
seethe.

His soul was happy in its happy  
sheath:

“What, Dauber, won’t it open? Fingers  
cold?

You’ll talk of this time, Dauber, when  
you’re old.”

He flung the door half-open, and a sea  
Washed them both in, over the splash-  
board, down.

“You silly salt miscarriage,” spluttered he.

“Dauber, pull out the plug before we  
drown.

That’s spoiled my laces and my velvet  
gown.

Where is the plug?” groping in pitch dark  
water

He sang between his teeth “The farmer’s  
daughter.”

It was pitch dark within there, at each  
roll

The chests slid to the slant, the water  
rushed,

Making full many a clanging tin pan bowl  
Into the black below-bunks as it gushed.

The dog-tired men slept through it, they  
were hushed.

The water drained, and then with matches  
damp

The man struck heads off till he lit the  
lamp.

“Thank you,” the Dauber said; the seaman  
grinned.

“This is your first foul weather?” “Yes.”

“I thought

Up on the yard you hadn’t seen much wind.

Them’s rotten sea boots, Dauber, that you  
brought.

Now I must cut on deck before I’m  
caught.”

He went, the lamp-flame smoked, he  
slammed the door;

A film of water loitered across the floor.

The Dauber watched it come, and watched  
it go.

He had had a revelation of the lies  
Cloaking the truth men never choose to know ;  
He could bear witness now and cleanse their  
eyes.

He had beheld in suffering, he was wise.  
This was the sea, this searcher of the soul,  
This never-dying shriek fresh from the  
Pole.

He shook with cold, his hands could not  
undo

His oilskin buttons, so he shook and sat  
Watching his dirty fingers, dirty blue,  
Hearing without the hammering tackle slat.

Within, the drops from dripping clothes  
went pat,  
Running in little patters, gentle, sweet,  
And "Ai, Ai," went the wind, and the seas  
beat.

His bunk was sopping wet, he clambered  
in,  
None of his clothes were dry: his fear re-  
curred.

Cramps bunched the muscles underneath  
his skin,  
The great ship rolled until the lamp was  
blurred.

He took his Bible and tried to read a  
word,  
Trembled at going aloft again, and  
then  
Resolved to fight it out and show it to  
men.

Faces recurred, fierce memories of the yard,  
The look of the sail, the savage eyes, the  
      jests,

The oaths of one great seaman, syphilis-  
      scarred,

The tug of the leeches jammed beneath  
      their chests,

The buntlines bellying bunts out into  
      breasts.

The deck so desolate-grey, the sky so wild.  
He fell asleep and slept like a young child.

But not for long: the cold awoke him soon,  
The hot-ache and the skin-cracks and the  
      cramp,

The seas thundering without, the gale's  
      wild tune,

The sopping misery of the blankets damp:  
A speaking-trumpet roared, a seaboot's  
      stamp

Clogged at the door, a man entered to shout,  
"All hands on deck! Arouse here! Tumble  
out!"

The caller raised the lamp; his oilskins  
clicked

As the thin ice upon them cracked and fell.

"Rouse out," he said. "This lamp is  
frozen wicked.

Rouse out," his accent deepened to a yell.

"We're among ice; it's blowing up like  
hell;

We're going to hand both topsails. Time,  
I guess,

We're sheeted up. Rouse out. Don't stay  
to dress."

"Is it cold on deck?" said Dauber. "Is  
it cold?

We're sheeted up, I tell you, inches thick;



The fo'c's'le's like a wedding-cake, I'm told ;  
Now tumble out, my sons ; on deck here ;  
quick.

Rouse out, away, and come and climb the  
stick :

I'm going to call the half-deck. Bosun.

Hey.

Both topsails coming in. Heave out.

Away."

He went ; the Dauber tumbled from his  
bunk,

Clutching the side ; he heard the wind go  
past,

Making the great ship wallow as if drunk.

There was a shocking tumult up the mast.

"This is the end," he muttered, "come at  
last ;

I've got to go aloft, facing this cold.

I can't. I can't. I'll never keep my hold.

“I cannot face the topsail yard again.  
I never guessed what misery it would  
be.”

The cramps and hot-ache made him sick  
with pain.

The ship stopped suddenly from a devilish  
sea,

Then with a triumph of wash, a rush of  
glee,

The door burst in, and in the water rolled,  
Filling the lower bunks, black, creaming,  
cold.

The lamp sucked out, “wash” went the  
water back,

Then in again, flooding; the bosun swore.  
“You useless thing, you Dauber, you lee  
slack,

Get out, you heekapoota; shut the door.  
You coo-ilyaira, what are you waiting for?

Out of my way, you thing, you useless  
thing."

He slammed the door indignant, clanging  
the ring.

And then he lit the lamp, drowned to the  
waist.

"Here's a fine house. Get at the scupper  
holes."

He bent against it as the water raced.

"And pull them out to leeward when she  
rolls;

They say some kinds of landsmen don't  
have souls.

I well believe. A Port Mahon baboon  
Would make more soul than you got with  
a spoon."

Down in the icy water Dauber groped  
To find the plug; the racing water sluiced

Over his head and shoulders as she sloped.  
Without, judged by the sound, all hell was  
loosed.

He felt cold Death about him tightly noosed,  
That Death was better than the misery  
there,  
Iced on the quaking foothold high in air.

And then the thought came: "I'm a failure.

All

My life has been a failure: they were right.  
It will not matter if I go and fall;  
I should be free, then, from this hell's de-  
light.

I'll never paint. Best let it end to-night.  
I'll slip over the side. I've tried and failed."  
So, in the ice-cold, in the night, he quailed.

Death would be better, Death, than this  
long hell

Of mockery and surrender and dismay,  
This long defeat of doing nothing well,  
Playing the part too high for him to play.  
"O Death, who hides the sorry thing away,  
Take me, I've failed. I cannot play these  
cards."

There came a thundering from the topsail  
yards.

And then he bit his lips, clenching his  
mind,  
And staggered out to muster, beating back  
The coward frozen self of him that  
whined.

Come what cards might, he meant to play  
the pack.

"Ai!" screamed the wind, the topsail sheets  
went clack,

Ice filled the air with spikes, the gray-backs  
burst.

“Here’s Dauber,” said the mate, “on deck  
the first.

“Why, holy sailor, Dauber, you’re a man;  
I took you for a soldier; up now, come.”  
Up on the yards already they began  
That battle with a gale which strikes men  
dumb.

The leaping topsail thundered like a drum,  
The frozen snow beat in the face like shots.  
The wind spun whipping wave-crests into  
clots.

So up, upon the topsail yard again,  
In the great tempest’s fiercest hour, began  
Probation to the Dauber’s soul of pain  
Which crowds a century’s torment in a  
span.

For the next month the ocean taught this  
man,

And he, in that month's torment, while she  
    wested,  
Was never warm, nor dry, nor full, nor  
    rested.

But still it blew, or, if it lulled, it rose  
Within the hour and blew again; and still  
The water as it burst aboard her froze.  
The wind blew off an ice-field, raw and  
    chill,  
Daunting man's body, tampering with his  
    will;  
But after thirty days a ghostly sun  
Gave sickly promise that the storms were  
    done.

## VI

A great grey sea was running up the sky;  
Desolate birds flew past, their mewings came  
As that lone water's spiritual cry,

Its forlorn voice, its essence, its soul's name.  
The ship limped in the water as if lame.  
Then in the forenoon watch to a great shout  
More sail was made, the reefs were shaken  
out,

A slant came from the south; the singers  
stood

Clapped to the halliards, hauling to a tune,  
Old as the sea, a fillip to the blood,  
While the upper topsail rose like a balloon.  
"So long, Cape Stiff. In Valparaiso soon,"  
Said one to other as the ship lay over,  
Making her course again, again a rover.

All felt Cape Horn was ended, all men's  
hearts

Lightened, and all men sang, so fair, so sweet  
Showed the half sunny heaven, blue in parts,  
After the month-long drive of Polar sheets;



They sang "King Louis," hauling aft the  
sheets;

Fo'c's'le and half-deck sang, the ship was  
ringing

With snatches of old songs and seamen  
singing.

Slowly the sea went down as the wind  
dropped;

Clear rang the songs, "Hurrah, Cape Horn  
is bet."

And some hung clothes to dry and others  
mopped

The filthy deckings, slimp with long wet,  
Where, mouldered over, tattered, gone to  
fret,

Old clothes appeared, old, drowned, forgotten  
things,

Washed under bunks and soaked to ravel-  
lings.

The Dauber, scrubbing out the roundhouse,  
found

Old pantiles gone to pulp, old clouts, old  
gear

In the below-bunks blackness long since  
drowned

During the agony of the Cape Horn year.

He sang in scrubbing, for he had done with  
fear;

He had endured the worst, he had passed  
through;

He thought of all the pictures he would do

On the immense scale of the sailor's stage:

The yard, the ship, the sea, the power of  
man

Matched against chaos in elemental rage,

The way of the wind upon the waters wan.

The pelting off the Horn had given him  
tan,

Brightened his eyes and plumped him, arms  
and face;

He had got manhood at the testing place.

Singing he scrubbed, passing his watch  
below,

Making the roundhouse fair; the bosun  
watched,

Bringing his knitting slowly to the toe;  
Sails stretched a mizen skysail which he  
patched;

They thought the Dauber was a bad egg  
hatched.

“Daubs,” said the bosun cheerly, “can  
you knit?

I’ve made a Barney’s bull of this last bit.”

Then, while the Dauber counted, bosun took  
Some marline from his pocket. “Here,” he  
said,

“You want to know square sennit? So  
fash. Look.

Eight foxes take, and stop the ends with  
thread;

I’ve known an engineer would give his head  
To know square sennit.” As the bosc  
began

The Dauber felt promoted into man.

It was his warrant that he had not failed,  
That the most hard peak in his difficult  
climb

Had not been past attainment; it was  
scaled,

In spite of perilous ways and slippery  
slime.

He had emerged out of the iron time  
And knew that he could compass his life’s  
scheme;

He had the power sufficient to his dream.

Then dinner came, and now the sky was  
blue.

The ship was standing north, the Horn was  
rounded;

She made a thundering as she weltered  
through.

The mighty gray-backs glittered as she  
bounded.

More sail was piled upon her: she was  
hounded

North, while the wind came; like a stag she  
ran

Over grey hills and hollows of seas wan.

She had a white bone in her mouth: she  
sped;

Those in the roundhouse watched her as  
they ate

Their meal of pork-fat fried with broken  
bread;

“Good old,” they cried, “she’s off, she’s  
gathering gait.”

Her track was whitening like a Lammas  
spate.

“Good old,” they cried, “oh, give her cloth.

Hurray

For three weeks more to Valparaiso Bay.”

“She smells old Vallipo,” the bosun cried,  
“We’ll be inside the tier in three weeks  
more,

Lying at double-moorings where they ride  
Off of the Market, half a mile from shore,  
And bumboat pan, my sons, and figs galore,  
And girls in black mantillas fit to make a  
Poor seaman frantic when they dance the  
cueca.

“Now, Daubs, stand by to smart her up  
for port,

Rouse out your paints, this clipper needs  
some brightening.

No afternoons below now days are short,  
But all hands holystoning her and whiten-  
ing

And making all her brass as bright as light-  
ning.

She's a crack ship, this hooker; smartened  
up,

She'll queen the tier and win the Consul's  
cup."

Eight bells were made, the watch was  
changed, and now

The mate spoke to the Dauber, "This is  
better.

We'll soon be getting mudhooks over the  
bow.

She'll make her passage still if this'll let  
her.

O, run, you drogher, dip your fo'c's'le  
wetter.

Well, Dauber, this is better than Cape  
Horn.

Them topsails made you wish you'd not  
been born."

"Yes, sir," the Dauber said. "Now," said  
the mate,

"We've got to smart her up. Them Cape  
Horn seas

Have made her paintwork like a rusty grate.

O, didn't them topsails make your fish-  
hooks freeze?

A topsail don't pay heed to 'won't you,  
please?'

Well. And you've seen Cape Horn, Dauber;  
you've learned.

You've dipped your hand and had your  
fingers burned.



“And now you’ll stow that folly, trying to  
paint;

You’ve had your lesson; you’re a sailor,  
now.

You come on board a woman ready to  
faint.

All sorts of slush you’d learned, the Lord  
knows how.

Well, Cape Horn’s sent you wisdom over  
the bow.

If you’ve got sense to take it. You’re a  
sailor.

My God, before, you were a woman’s  
tailor.

“So throw your paints to blazes and have  
done.

Words can’t describe the silly things you  
did,

Sitting before your easel in the sun,

With all your colours on the paint-box  
lid.

I blushed for you . . . and then the daubs  
you hid.

My God! you'll have more sense now, eh?  
You've quit?"

"No, sir." "You've not?" "No, sir."  
"God give you wit.

"I thought you'd come to wisdom."

Thus they talked

While the great clipper took her bit and  
rushed

Like a skin-glistening stallion not yet  
balked,

Till fire-bright water at her swingports  
gushed;

Poising and bowing down her forefoot  
crushed

Bubble on glittering bubble; on she went.

The Dauber watched her, wondering what  
it meant

To come, after long months, at rosy dawn,  
Into the placid blue of some great bay,  
Treading the quiet water like a fawn  
Ere yet the morning haze was blown away,  
A rose-flushed figure putting aside the  
grey,

And anchoring there before the city smoke  
Rose, or the church-bells rang, or men  
awoke.

And then, in the first light, to see grow  
clear

That long-expected haven filled with  
strangers,

Alive with men and women; see and hear  
Its clattering market and its money-  
changers;

And hear the surf beat, and be free from  
dangers,  
And watch the crinkled ocean blue with  
calm  
Drowsing beneath the Trade, beneath the  
palm.

Hungry for that he worked ; the hour went  
by  
And still the wind grew, still the clipper  
strode ;  
And now a darkness hid the western  
sky,  
And sprays came flicking off at the wind's  
goad.  
She stumbled now, feeling her sail a load.  
The mate gazed hard to windward, eyed his  
sail,  
And said the Horn was going to flick her  
tail.

Boldly he kept it on her till she staggered,  
But still the wind increased; it grew, it  
grew,

Darkening the sky, making the water haggard;  
Full of small snow the mighty wester blew.

“More fun for little fish-hooks,” sighed the  
crew.

They eyed the taut topgallants stiff like  
steel;

A second hand was ordered to the wheel.

The captain eyed her aft, sucking his lip,  
Feeling the sail too much, but yet refrain-  
ing

From putting hobbles on the leaping ship,  
The glad sea-shattering stallion, halter  
, straining,

Wind-musical, uproarious and complaining:  
But, in a gust, he cocked his finger, so:

“You’d better take them off, before they go.”

All saw. They ran at once without the word.

“Leeay, Leeay!” loud rang the clewline cries.

Sam in his bunk within the half-deck heard,

Stirred in his sleep and rubbed his drowsy eyes.

“There go the lower to’gallants.” Against the skies

Rose the thin bellying strips of leaping sail.

The Dauber was the first man over the rail.

Three to a mast they ran; it was a race.

“God,” said the mate, “that Dauber, he can go.”

He watched the runners with an upturned  
face,

Over the futtocks struggling heel to toe,  
Up to the topmast cross trees into the  
blow,

Where the three sails were leaping.

“Dauber wins.”

The yards were reached and now the race  
begins.

Which three will furl their sail first and  
come down?

Out to the yard-arm for the leech goes one,  
His hair blowing flagwise from a hatless  
crown,

His hands at work like fever to be done.

Out of the gale a fiercer fury spun.

The three sails leaped together, yanking  
high,

Like talons darting up to clutch the sky.

The Dauber on the fore topgallant yard  
Was at the weather-arm; he was the first  
To wrestle with the canvas bellying hard,  
Bulged by the shrieking wester's bitter  
burst.

He got his leech in, while a comrade cursed  
The lead of the buntlines and, with oaths,  
observed :

"The eye of the outer jib-stay isn't served."

"No?" said the Dauber. "No," the man  
replied.

They heaved, stowing the sail, not looking  
round,

Panting, but full of life and eager-eyed;  
The gale roared at them with its iron sound.

"That's you," the Dauber said. His gas-  
ket wound

Swift round the yard, binding the sail in  
bands.



There came a gust, the sail leaped from his  
hands

So that he saw it high above him, grey,  
And there his mate was falling; quick he  
clutched

An arm in oilskins swiftly snatched away.  
A voice said "Christ!" a quick shape  
stooped and touched,

Chain struck his hands, ropes shot, the sky  
was smutched

With vast black fires that ran, that fell,  
that furled,

And then he saw the mast, the small snow  
hurled,

The fore topgallant yard far, far aloft,  
And blankness settling on him and great  
pain,

And snow beneath his fingers wet and soft,

And topsail-sheet-blocks shaking at the  
chain.

He knew it was he who had fallen; then  
his brain

Swirled in a circle while he watched the  
sky.

Infinite multitudes of snow blew by.

"I thought it was Tom who fell," his  
brain's voice said.

"Down on the bloody deck," the captain  
screamed.

The multitudinous little snowflakes sped.  
His pain was real enough, but all else  
seemed.

Si with a bucket ran, the water gleamed,  
Tilting upon him, others came, the  
mate . . .

They knelt with eager eyes like things that  
wait

For other things to come. He saw them  
there.

“It will go on,” he murmured, watching  
Si.

Colours and sounds seemed mixing in the  
air.

The pain was stunning him and the wind  
went by.

“More water,” said the mate. “Here,  
bosun; try,  
Ask if he’s got a message. Hell! he’s gone.  
Here, Dauber, Paints.” He said, “It will  
go on.”

Not knowing his meaning rightly, but he  
spoke

With the intenseness of a fading soul  
Whose share of nature’s fire turns to smoke,  
Whose hand on nature’s wheel loses control.  
The eager faces glowered red like coal;

They glowed, the great storm glowed, the sails, the mast.

"It will go on," he cried aloud, and passed.

Those from the yard came down to tell the tale.

"He almost had me off," said Tom. "He slipped.

There come one hell-of-a jump-like from the sail.

He clutched at me and almost had me pipped.

He caught my 'ris'band, but the oilskin ripped.

It tore clean off. Look here. I was near gone.

I made a grab to catch him; so did John.

"I caught his arm. My God, I was near done.

He almost had me over: it was near.  
He hit the ropes and grabbed at every  
one."

"Well," said the mate, "we cannot leave  
him here.

Run, Si, and get the half-deck table clear;  
We'll lay him there. Catch hold there,  
you, and you.

He's dead, poor son, there's nothing more  
to do."

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber  
lay

Covered upon the table; all night long  
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,  
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.  
But to the covered shape she did no wrong;  
He lay under the sailcloth. Bell by bell  
The night wore through; the stars rose,  
the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear  
sky,

The wind roared all night long; and all  
night through

The green seas on the deck went washing  
by,

Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.

But little of it all the Dauber knew :

The sopping bunks, the floating chests, the  
wet,

The darkness and the misery and the  
sweat.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,  
And when the watches changed the men  
would come,

Dripping within the door to strike a light  
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,  
And say, "He come a cruel thump, poor.  
chum."

Or "He'd a been a fine big man," or

"He . . .

A smart young seaman he was getting to  
be."

Or, "Damn it all, it's what we've all to  
face. . . .

I knew another fellow one time . . ." then  
Came a strange tale of death in a strange  
place

Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering  
men.

In many ways Death puts us into pen.  
The reefers came down tired and looked  
and slept.

Below the skylight little dribbles crept

Along the painted woodwork, glistening,  
slow,

Following the roll and dripping, never fast,

But dripping on the quiet form below  
Like passing time talking to time long  
past.

And all night long "Ai! Ai!" went the  
wind's blast,

And creaming water swished below the pale  
Unheeding body stretched below the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight  
bells

They bore him to the gangway, wading  
deep,

Through the green-clutching, white-toothed  
water-hells

That flung his carriers over in their sweep.

They laid an old red ensign on the heap,

And all hands stood bareheaded, stooping,  
swaying,

Washed by the sea, while the old man was  
praying



Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a  
sign

They twitched the ensign back and tipped  
the grating :

A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling  
brine,

The muffled figure tilted to the weight-  
ing,

It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating ;  
Some craned to see, it dimmed, it disap-  
peared,

The last green milky bubble blinked and  
cleared.

“Mister, shake out your reefs,” the captain  
called.

“Out topsail reefs,” the mate cried ; then  
all hands

Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands  
hailed,

Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,  
Of the drowned lover come in dripping  
bands,  
Green with the wet and cold, to tell his  
lover  
That Death was in the sea and all was  
over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman  
said  
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again  
The clipper held her course, showing red  
lead,  
Shattering the sea tops into golden rain;  
The waves bowed down before her like  
blown grain.  
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage  
was short,  
Before the tier's bells rang her into  
port.

Cheerily they rang her in, those beating  
bells,  
The new-come beauty stately from the  
sea,  
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy  
swells,  
Treading the bubbles down: with three  
times three  
They cheered her moving beauty in; and  
she  
Came to her berth, so noble, so superb,  
Swayed like a queen and answered to the  
curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft  
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour  
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,  
And beauty in the heart breaks like a  
flower.

Working aloft they saw the mountain tower

Snow to the peak ; they heard the launch-  
men shout ;  
And bright along the bay the lights came  
out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night  
long

The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,  
Frozen, alert, austere ; the eagle's song  
Screamed from her desolate screees and  
splintered scars.

On her intense crags, where the air is  
sparse,

The stars looked down, their many golden  
eyes

Watched her and burned, burned out, and  
came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,  
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows ;

Then the sun's coming turned the peak to  
blood,

And in the resthouse the muleteers arose.

And all day long, where only the eagle goes,

Stones, loosened by the sun, fall: the stones

falling

Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes call-

ing.

## BIOGRAPHY

WHEN I am buried, all my thoughts and acts  
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,  
And long before this wandering flesh is  
rotten

The dates which made me will be all for-  
gotten;

And none will know the gleam there used  
to be

About the feast days freshly kept by me,  
But men will call the golden hour of bliss  
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Men do not heed the rungs by which men  
climb

Those glittering steps, those milestones upon  
Time,

Those tombstones of dead selves, those  
    hours of birth,  
Those moments of the soul in years of earth  
They mark the height achieved, the main  
    result,  
The power of freedom in the perished cult,  
The power of boredom in the dead man's  
    deeds,  
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled  
    seeds.

By many waters and on many ways  
I have known golden instants and bright  
    days;  
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,  
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;  
The summer day on which in heart's delight  
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white,  
The glittering day when all the waves wore  
    flags

And the ship *Wanderer* came with sails in  
rags ;

That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk  
When life became more splendid than its  
husk,

When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains  
Shone with a doorway opening beyond  
brains ;

The dawn when, with a brace-block's creak-  
ing cry,

Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,  
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of  
red,

Then gone, with one raised hand and one  
turned head ;

The howling evening when the spindrift's  
mists

Broke to display the four Evangelists,  
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by  
breakers,



Wind-beaten bones of long since buried  
acres ;

The night alone near water when I heard  
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird ;  
The English dusk when I beheld once more  
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citted  
shore,

The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly  
trod

(In happier seasons) and gave thanks to  
God.

All had their beauty, their bright moments'  
gift,

Their something caught from Time, the  
ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden ; but life's  
hands

Have given more constant gifts in changing  
lands,

And when I count those gifts, I think them  
such

As no man's bounty could have bettered  
much:

The gift of country life, near hills and  
woods

Where happy waters sing in solitudes,

The gift of being near ships, of seeing each  
day

A city of ships with great ships under  
weigh,

The great street paved with water, filled  
with shipping,

And all the world's flags flying and seagulls  
dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not  
know

Those water-trampling ships which made  
me glow,

But think my wonder mad and fail to  
find

Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,

And yet they made me :

not alone the ships

But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to  
whips,

The two close friends of nearly twenty  
years,

Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-  
peers,

Whose feet with mine wore many a bolt-  
head bright

Treading the decks beneath the riding light.

Yet death will make that warmth of friend-  
ship cold

And who'll know what one said and what  
one told

Our hearts' communion and the broken  
spells

When the loud call blew at the strike of  
bells?

No one, I know, yet let me be believed  
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a  
word

Live in the soul to make the being stirred,  
Towns can be prisons where the spirit dulls  
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,  
Away from all bright water and great hills  
And sheep-walks where the curlews cry their  
fills,

Away in towns, where eyes have nought to  
see

But dead museums and miles of misery  
And floating life unrooted from man's need  
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch  
greed

And life made wretched out of human ken

And miles of shopping women served by men.  
So, if the penman sums my London days  
Let him but say that there were holy ways,  
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick man-  
sions old  
With stinking doors where women stood to  
scold  
And drunken waits at Christmas with their  
horn  
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was  
born ;  
And windy gas lamps and the wet roads  
shining  
And that old carol of the midnight whining,  
And that old room (above the noisy slum)  
Where there was wine and fire and talk  
with some  
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul  
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out  
coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and  
those friends,

Those glittering moments that a spirit lends

That all may be imagined from the flash

The cloud-hid god-game through the light-  
ning gash

Those hours of stricken sparks from which  
men took

Light to send out to men in song or  
book.

Those friends who heard St. Pancras' bells  
strike two

Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew.

Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's  
best,

The thought beyond great poets not ex-  
pressed,

The glory of mood where human frailty  
failed,

The forts of human light not yet assailed,

Till the dim room had mind and seemed to  
brood

Binding our wills to mental brotherhood,  
Till we became a college, and each night  
Was discipline and manhood and delight,  
Till our farewells and winding down the  
stairs

At each grey dawn had meaning that Time  
spares,

That we, so linked, should roam the whole  
world round

Teaching the ways our brooding minds had  
found

Making that room our Chapter, our one  
mind

Where all that this world soiled should be  
refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again  
And see the alley glimmering in the rain,

Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps  
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under  
lamps,

The secret house where once a beggar stood  
Trembling and blind to show his woe for  
food.

And now I miss that friend who used to  
walk

Home to my lodgings with me, deep in  
talk,

Wearing the last of night out in still  
streets

Trodden by us and policemen on their  
beats

And cats, but else deserted; now I miss  
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his  
And that strange way he had of making  
gleam,

Like something real, the art we used to  
dream.



London has been my prison ; but my books  
Hills and great waters, labouring men and  
                  brooks,

Ships and deep friendships and remembered  
                  days

Which even now set all my mind ablaze  
As that June day when, in the red bricks'  
                  chinks

I saw the old Roman ruins white with  
                  pinks

And felt the hillside haunted even then  
By not dead memory of the Roman men.  
And felt the hillside thronged by souls un-  
                  seen

Who knew the interest in me and were keen  
That man alive should understand man  
                  dead

So many centuries since the blood was shed.  
And quickened with strange hush because  
                  this comer

Sensed a strange soul alive behind the  
summer.

That other day on Ercall when the stones  
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied  
bones,

While the bees droned and all the air was  
sweet

From honey buried underneath my feet,  
Honey of purple heather and white clover  
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's  
over.

Then other days by water, by bright sea,  
Clear as clean glass and my bright friend  
with me,

The cove clean bottomed where we saw the  
brown

Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet  
down

And saw the long fronds waving, white  
with shells,

Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;  
That sadder day when we beheld the great  
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate  
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great  
cliff's gaps

Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,  
While drenching clouds drove by and every  
sense

Was water roaring or rushing or in offence,  
And mountain sheep stood huddled and  
blown gaps gleamed

Where torn white hair of torrents shook  
and streamed.

That sadder day when we beheld again  
A spate going down in sunshine after rain,  
When the blue reach of water leaping  
bright

Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked  
with white.

And that far day, that never blotted page

When youth was bright like flowers about  
old age

Fair generations bringing thanks for life  
To that old kindly man and trembling wife  
After their sixty years: Time never made  
A better beauty since the Earth was laid  
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair  
For the great gift of life which brought  
them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the  
days

Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise,  
The day they led my cutter at the turn  
Yet could not keep the lead and dropped  
astern,

The moment in the spurt when both boats'  
oars

Dipped in each other's wash and throats  
grew hoarse

And teeth ground into teeth and both  
strokes quickened

Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts  
sickened

And coxswains damned us, dancing, banking  
stroke,

To put our weights on, though our hearts  
were broke

And both boats seemed to stick and sea  
seemed glue,

The tide a mill race we were struggling  
through

And every quick recover gave us squints  
Of them still there, and oar tossed water-  
glints

And cheering came, our friends, our foemen  
cheering,

A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hear-  
ing —

“Port Fore!” and “Starboard Fore!”

“Port Fore.” “Port Fore.”

“Up with her, Starboard,” and at that each  
oar

Lightened, though arms were bursting, and  
eyes shut

And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut  
And the curse quickened from the cox, our  
bows

Crashed, and drove talking water, we made  
vows

Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain  
We numbered things we'd never eat again  
If we could only win; then came the yell  
“Starboard,” “Port Fore,” and then a  
beaten bell

Rung as for fire to cheer us. “Now.”  
Oars bent

Soul took the looms now body's bolt was  
spent,

“Damn it, come on now,” “On now,”  
“On now,” “Starboard.”

“Port Fore.” “Up with her, Port”; each  
cutter harboured

Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, “Heave,  
oh, heave,”

Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking  
sheave.

“Heave,” and I saw a back, then two.  
“Port Fore.”

“Starboard.” “Come on.” I saw the mid-  
ship oar

And knew we had done them. “Port Fore.”  
“Starboard.” “Now.”

I saw bright water spurting at their bow  
Their cox' full face an instant. They were  
done.

The watchers' cheering almost drowned the  
gun.

We had hardly strength to toss our oars;  
our cry

Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed  
great :

Wild days in a pampero off the Plate ;

Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the  
Coves

Which the young gannet and the corbie  
loves ;

Surf-swimming between rollers, catching  
breath

Between the advancing grave and breaking  
death,

Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth  
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth,  
And days of labour also, loading, hauling ;

Long days at winch or capstan, heaving,  
pawling ;

The days with oxen, dragging stone from  
blasting,

And dusty days in mills, and hot days  
masting.



Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth like  
ice,

And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice ;  
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields  
did blanch

With White Leghorns come from the chicken  
ranch.

Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,  
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill.  
Delights of work most real, delights that  
change

The headache life of towns to rapture  
strange

Not known by townsmen, nor imagined ;  
health

That puts new glory upon mental wealth  
And makes the poor man rich.

But that ends, too,  
Health with its thoughts of life ; and that  
bright view

That sunny landscape from life's peak, that  
glory,

And all a glad man's comments on life's  
story

And thoughts of marvellous towns and liv-  
ing men

And what pens tell and all beyond the pen  
End, and are summed in words so truly  
dead

They raise no image of the heart and head,  
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,  
The mind ours argued with or listened to,  
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness,  
all,

Is dead as print before the funeral,  
Even deader after, when the dates are  
sought,

And cold minds disagree with what we  
thought.

This many pictured world of many passions

Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,  
And what life is is much to very few,  
Men being so strange, so mad, and what  
men do  
So good to watch or share; but when men  
count  
Those hours of life that were a bursting  
fount,  
Sparkling the dusty heart with living  
springs,  
There seems a world, beyond our earthly  
things,  
Gated by golden moments, each bright  
time  
Opening to show the city white like lime,  
High towered and many peopled. This  
made sure,  
Work that obscures those moments seems  
impure,  
Making our not-returning time of breath

Dull with the ritual and records of death,  
That frost of fact by which our wisdom  
gives  
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they  
gave  
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,  
And gives his work compassion and new  
eyes.  
The days that make us happy make us wise.

## SHIPS

I CANNOT tell their wonder nor make known  
Magic that once thrilled through me to the  
bone,

But all men praise some beauty, tell some  
tale,

Vent a high mood which makes the rest  
seem pale,

Pour their heart's blood to flourish one  
green leaf,

Follow some Helen for her gift of grief,  
And fail in what they mean, whate'er they  
do :

You should have seen, man cannot tell to  
you

The beauty of the ships of that my city.

That beauty now is spoiled by the sea's pity ;  
For one may haunt the pier a score of  
times,

Hearing St. Nicholas bells ring out the  
chimes,

Yet never see those proud ones swaying  
home

With mainyards backed and bows a cream  
of foam,

Those bows so lovely-curving, cut so fine,  
Those coulters of the many-bubbled brine,  
As once, long since, when all the docks were  
filled

With that sea-beauty man has ceased to  
build.

Yet, though their splendour may have  
ceased to be,

Each played her sovereign part in making  
me ;

Now I return my thanks with heart and  
lips

For the great queenliness of all those ships.

And first the first bright memory, still so  
clear,

An autumn evening in a golden year,  
When in the last lit moments before dark  
The *Chepica*, a steel-grey lovely barque,  
Came to an anchor near us on the flood,  
Her trucks aloft in sun-glow red as blood.

Then come so many ships that I could  
fill

Three docks with their fair hulls remem-  
bered still,

Each with her special memory's special  
grace,

Riding the sea, making the waves give  
place

To delicate high beauty; man's best  
strength,

Noble in every line in all their length.

*Ailsa, Genista*, ships, with long jibbooms,

The *Wanderer* with great beauty and strange  
dooms,

*Liverpool* (mightiest then) superb, sublime,

The *California* huge, as slow as time.

The *Copley* swift, the perfect *J. T. North*,

The loveliest barque my city has sent forth,

Dainty *John Lockett* well remembered yet,

The splendid *Argus* with her skysail set,

Stalwart *Drumcliff*, white-blocked, majestic

*Sierras*,

Divine bright ships, the water's standard-  
bearers;

*Melpomene, Euphrosyne*, and their sweet

Sea-troubling sisters of the Fernie fleet;

*Corunna* (in whom my friend died) and the  
old



Long since loved *Esmeralda* long since  
sold.

*Centurion* passed in Rio, *Glaucus* spoken,  
*Aladdin* burnt, the *Bidston* water-broken,  
*Yola*, in whom my friend sailed, *Dawpool*  
trim,

Fierce-bowed *Egeria* plunging to the swim,  
*Stanmore* wide-sterned, sweet *Cupica*, tall  
*Bard*,

Queen in all harbours with her moon sail  
yard.

Though I tell many, there must still be  
others,

McVickar Marshall's ships and Fernie  
Brothers',

*Lochs*, *Counties*, *Shires*, *Drums*, the count-  
less lines

Whose house-flags all were once familiar  
signs

At high main-trucks on Mersey's windy  
ways

When sunlight made the wind-white water  
blaze.

Their names bring back old mornings, when  
the docks

Shone with their house-flags and their  
painted blocks,

Their raking masts below the Custom  
House

And all the marvellous beauty of their  
bows.

Familiar steamers, too, majestic steamers,

Shearing Atlantic roller-tops to streamers,

*Umbria, Etruria*, noble, still at sea,

The grandest, then, that man had brought  
to be.

*Majestic, City of Paris, City of Rome*,

Forever jealous racers, out and home.

The *Alfred Holt's* blue smoke-stacks down  
the stream,

The fair *Loanda* with her bows a-cream.

Booth liners, Anchor liners, Red Star liners,

The marks and styles of countless ship-  
designers,

The *Magdalena*, *Puno*, *Potosi*,

Lost *Cotopaxi*, all well known to me.

These splendid ships, each with her grace,  
her glory,

Her memory of old song or comrade's story,

Still in my mind the image of life's need,

Beauty in hardest action, beauty indeed.

"They built great ships and sailed them"

sounds most brave

Whatever arts we have or fail to have ;

I touch my country's mind, I come to grips

With half her purpose, thinking of these  
ships

That art untouched by softness, all that  
line

Drawn ringing hard to stand the test of  
brine,

That nobleness and grandeur, all that  
beauty

Born of a manly life and bitter duty,

That splendour of fine bows which yet  
could stand

The shock of rollers never checked by land.

That art of masts, sail crowded, fit to break,

Yet stayed to strength and backstayed  
into rake,

The life demanded by that art, the keen

Eye-puckered, hard-case seamen, silent,  
lean,—

They are grander things than all the art of  
towns,

Their tests are tempests and the sea that  
drowns,

They are my country's line, her great art  
done

By strong brains labouring on the thought  
unwon,

They mark our passage as a race of men,  
Earth will not see such ships as those again.

## TRUTH

MAN with his burning soul  
Has but an hour of breath  
To build a ship of Truth  
In which his soul may sail,  
Sail on the sea of death.  
For death takes toll  
Of beauty, courage, youth,  
Of all but Truth.

Life's city ways are dark,  
Men mutter by; the wells  
Of the great waters moan.  
O death, O sea, O tide,  
The waters moan like bells.  
No light, no mark,  
The soul goes out alone  
On seas unknown.

Stripped of all purple robes,  
Stripped of all golden lies,  
I will not be afraid.  
Truth will preserve through death;  
Perhaps the stars will rise,  
The stars like globes.  
The ship my striving made  
May see night fade.

## THEY CLOSED HER EYES

FROM THE SPANISH OF DON GUSTAVO

A. BÉCQUER.

THEY closed her eyes,  
They were still open ;  
They hid her face  
With a white linen,  
And, some sobbing,  
Others in silence,  
From the sad bedroom  
All came away.

The night-light in a dish  
Burned on the floor,  
It flung on the wall  
The bed's shadow,



And in that shadow  
One saw sometimes  
Drawn in sharp line  
The body's shape.

The day awakened  
At its first whiteness  
With its thousand noises;  
The town awoke  
Before that contrast  
Of life and strangeness,  
Of light and darkness.  
I thought a moment  
*My God, how lonely*  
*The dead are!*

From the house, shoulder-high  
To church they bore her,  
And in a chapel  
They left her bier.

There they surrounded  
Her pale body  
With yellow candles  
And black stuffs.

At the last stroke  
Of the ringing for the souls  
An old crone finished  
Her last prayers.  
She crossed the narrow nave;  
The doors moaned,  
And the holy place  
Remained deserted.

From a clock one heard  
The measured ticking,  
And from some candles  
The guttering.  
All things there  
Were so grim and sad,

So dark and rigid,  
That I thought a moment,  
*My God, how lonely*  
*The dead are!*

From the high belfry  
The tongue of iron  
Clanged, giving out  
His sad farewell.  
Crape on their clothes,  
Her friends and kindred  
Passed in a row,  
Making procession.

In the last vault,  
Dark and narrow,  
The pickaxe opened  
A niche at one end;  
There they laid her down.  
Soon they bricked the place up,

And with a gesture  
Bade grief farewell.

Pickaxe on shoulder  
The grave-digger,  
Singing between his teeth,  
Passed out of sight.

The night came down ;  
It was all silent,  
Lost in the shadows  
I thought a moment.

*My God, how lonely  
The dead are !*

In the long nights  
Of bitter winter,  
When the wind makes  
The rafters creak,  
When the violent rain  
Lashes the windows,  
Lonely, I remember  
That poor girl.

There falls the rain  
With its noise eternal.  
There the north wind  
Fights with the rain.  
Stretched in the hollow  
Of the damp bricks  
Perhaps her bones  
Freeze with the cold.

Does the dust return to dust?  
Does the soul fly to heaven?  
Is all vile matter,  
Rottenness, filthiness?  
I know not. But  
There is something — something  
That I cannot explain,  
Something that gives us  
Loathing, terror,  
To leave the dead  
So alone, so wretched.

## THE HARP

FROM THE SPANISH OF DON GUSTAVO

A. BECQUER

IN a dark corner of the room,  
Perhaps forgotten by its owner,  
Silent and dim with dust,  
I saw the harp.

How many musics slumbered in its strings,  
As the bird sleeps in the branches,  
Waiting the snowy hand  
That could awaken them.

Ah me, I thought, how many, many times  
Genius thus slumbers in a human soul,  
Waiting, as Lazarus waited, for a voice  
To bid him "Rise and walk."

## SONNET

FROM THE SPANISH OF DON FRANCISCO DE  
QUEVEDO

I SAW the ramparts of my native land,  
One time so strong, now dropping in decay,  
Their strength destroyed by this new age's  
way

That has worn out and rotted what was  
grand.

I went into the fields: there I could see  
The sun drink up the waters newly thawed,  
And on the hills the moaning cattle pawed;  
Their miseries robbed the day of light for  
me.

I went into my house: I saw how spotted,  
Decaying things made that old home their  
prize.

My withered walking-staff had come to  
bend;

I felt the age had won; my sword was  
rotted,

And there was nothing on which I set my  
eyes

That was not a reminder of the end.



SONNET ON THE DEATH OF HIS  
WIFE

FROM THE PORTUGUESE OF ANTONIO DE  
FERREIRO

THAT blessed sunlight that once showed to  
me

My way to heaven more plain more cer-  
tainly,

And with her bright beam banished utterly  
All trace of mortal sorrow far from me,  
Has gone from me, has left her prison sad,  
And I am blind and alone and gone astray,  
Like a lost pilgrim in a desert way  
Wanting the blessed guide that once he had.

Thus with a spirit bowed and mind a blur  
I trace the holy steps where she has gone,

By valleys and by meadows and by moun-  
tains,

And everywhere I catch a glimpse of her.

She takes me by the hand and leads me on,

And my eyes follow her, my eyes made  
fountains.

## SONG

ONE sunny time in May  
When lambs were sporting,  
The sap ran in the spray  
And I went courting,  
And all the apple boughs  
Were bright with blossom,  
I picked an early rose  
For my love's bosom.

And then I met her friend,  
Down by the water,  
Who cried "She's met her end,  
That gray-eyed daughter ;  
That voice of hers is stilled  
Her beauty broken."  
O me, my love is killed,  
My love unspoken.

She was too sweet, too dear,  
To die so cruel,  
O Death, why leave me here  
And take my jewel?  
Her voice went to the bone,  
So true, so ringing,  
And now I go alone,  
Winter or springing.

## THE BALLAD OF SIR BORS

WOULD I could win some quiet and rest, and  
a little ease,  
In the cool grey hush of the dusk, in the  
dim green place of the trees,  
Where the birds are singing, singing, sing-  
ing, crying aloud  
The song of the red, red rose that blossoms  
beyond the seas.

Would I could see it, the rose, when the  
light begins to fail,  
And a lone white star in the West is glim-  
mering on the mail;  
The red, red passionate rose of the sacred  
blood of the Christ,  
In the shining chalice of God, the cup of  
the Holy Grail.

The dusk comes gathering grey, and the  
darkness dims the West,

The oxen low to the byre, and all bells ring  
to rest ;

But I ride over the moors, for the dusk still  
bides and waits,

That brims my soul with the glow of the  
rose that ends the Quest.

My horse is spavined and ribbed, and his  
bones come through his hide,

My sword is rotten with rust, but I shake  
the reins and ride,

For the bright white birds of God that nest  
in the rose have called,

And never a township now is a town where  
I can bide.

It will happen at last, at dusk, as my horse  
limps down the fell,

A star will glow like a note God strikes on a  
silver bell,

And the bright white birds of God will  
carry my soul to Christ,

And the sight of the Rose, the Rose, will  
pay for the years of hell.

## SPANISH WATERS

SPANISH waters, Spanish waters, you are  
ringing in my ears,  
Like a slow sweet piece of music from the  
grey forgotten years;  
Telling tales, and beating tunes, and bring-  
ing weary thoughts to me  
Of the sandy beach at Muertos, where I  
would that I could be.

There's a surf breaks on Los Muertos, and  
it never stops to roar,  
And it's there we came to anchor, and it's  
there we went ashore,  
Where the blue lagoon is silent amid snags  
of rotting trees,  
Dropping like the clothes of corpses cast up  
by the seas.



We anchored at Los Muertos when the dipping sun was red,  
We left her half-a-mile to sea, to west of Nigger Head;  
And before the mist was on the Cay, before the day was done,  
We were all ashore on Muertos with the gold that we had won.

We bore it through the marshes in a half-score battered chests,  
Sinking, in the sucking quagmires, to the sunburn on our breasts,  
Heaving over tree-trunks, gasping, damning at the flies and heat,  
Longing for a long drink, out of silver, in the ship's cool lazareet.

The moon came white and ghostly as we laid the treasure down,

There was gear there'd make a beggarman  
as rich as Lima Town,  
Copper charms and silver trinkets from the  
chests of Spanish crews,  
Gold doubloons and double moydores, louis  
d'ors and portagues,

Clumsy yellow-metal earrings from the  
Indians of Brazil,  
Uncut emeralds out of Rio, bezoar stones  
from Guayaquil ;  
Silver, in the crude and fashioned, pots of  
old Arica bronze,  
Jewels from the bones of Incas desecrated  
by the Dons.

We smoothed the place with mattocks, and  
we took and blazed the tree,  
Which marks yon where the gear is hid that  
none will ever see,

And we laid aboard the ship again, and  
south away we steers,  
Through the loud surf of Los Muertos  
which is beating in my ears.

I'm the last alive that knows it. All the  
rest have gone their ways  
Killed, or died, or come to anchor in the old  
Mulatas Cays,  
And I go singing, fiddling, old and starved  
and in despair,  
And I know where all that gold is hid, if I  
were only there.

It's not the way to end it all. I'm old,  
and nearly blind,  
And an old man's past's a strange thing,  
for it never leaves his mind.  
And I see in dreams, awhile, the beach,  
the sun's disc dipping red,

And the tall ship, under topsails, swaying  
in past Nigger Head.

I'd be glad to step ashore there. Glad to  
take a pick and go

To the lone blazed coco-palm tree in the  
place no others know,

And lift the gold and silver that has  
mouldered there for years

By the loud surf of Los Muertos which is  
beating in my ears.

## CARGOES

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant  
Ophir,  
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,  
With a cargo of ivory,  
And apes and peacocks,  
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white  
wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the  
Isthmus,  
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-  
green shores,  
With a cargo of diamonds,  
Emeralds, amethysts,  
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked  
smoke stack,

Butting through the Channel in the mad  
March days,

With a cargo of Tyne coal,

Road-rails, pig-lead,

Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

## CAPTAIN STRATTON'S FANCY

Oh some are fond of red wine, and some are  
fond of white,  
And some are all for dancing by the pale  
moonlight ;  
But rum alone's the tipples, and the heart's  
delight  
Of the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of Spanish wine, and  
some are fond of French,  
And some'll swallow tay and stuff fit only  
for a wench ;  
But I'm for right Jamaica till I roll beneath  
the bench,  
Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are for the lily, and some are for  
the rose,

But I am for the sugar-cane that in Jamaica  
grows ;

For it's that that makes the bonny drink to  
warm my copper nose,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of fiddles, and a song  
well sung,

And some are all for music for to lilt upon  
the tongue ;

But mouths were made for tankards, and  
for sucking at the bung,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are fond of dancing, and some are  
fond of dice,

And some are all for red lips, and pretty  
lasses' eyes ;



But a right Jamaica puncheon is a finer  
prize

To the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some that's good and godly ones they  
hold that it's a sin

To troll the jolly bowl around, and let the  
dollars spin;

But I'm for toleration and for drinking at  
an inn,

Says the old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

Oh some are sad and wretched folk that go  
in silken suits,

And there's a mort of wicked rogues that  
live in good reputes;

So I'm for drinking honestly, and dying in  
my boots,

Like an old bold mate of Henry Morgan.

## AN OLD SONG RE-SUNG

I SAW a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing,  
With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in  
her hold ;  
And a bosun in a blue coat bawling at the  
railing,  
Piping through a silver call that had a chain  
of gold ;  
The summer wind was failing and the tall  
ship rolled.

I saw a ship a-steering, a-steering,  
a-steering,  
With roses in red thread worked upon her  
sails ;  
With sacks of purple amethysts, the spoils  
of buccaneering,

Skins of musky yellow wine, and silks in  
bales,

Her merry men were cheering, hauling on  
the brails.

I saw a ship a-sinking, a-sinking, a-sinking,  
With glittering sea-water splashing on her  
decks,

With seamen in her spirit-room singing  
songs and drinking,

Pulling claret bottles down, and knocking  
off the necks,

The broken glass was chinking as she sank  
among the wrecks.

## ST. MARY'S BELLS

It's pleasant in Holy Mary  
By San Marie lagoon,  
The bells they chime and jingle  
From dawn to afternoon.  
They rhyme and chime and mingle,  
They pulse and boom and beat,  
And the laughing bells are gentle  
And the mournful bells are sweet.

Oh, who are the men that ring them,  
The bells of San Marie,  
Oh, who but sonsie seamen  
Come in from over sea,  
And merrily in the belfries  
They rock and sway and hale,  
And send the bells a-jangle,  
And down the lusty ale.

It's pleasant in Holy Mary  
To hear the beaten bells  
Come booming into music,  
Which throbs, and clangs, and swells,  
From sunset till the daybreak,  
From dawn to afternoon.  
In port of Holy Mary  
On San Marie lagoon.

## LONDON TOWN

OH London Town's a fine town, and Lon-  
don sights are rare,  
And London ale is right ale, and brisk's the  
London air,  
And busily goes the world there, but crafty  
grows the mind,  
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to  
leave behind.

Then hey for croft and hop-yard, and hill,  
and field, and pond,  
With Breden Hill before me and Malvern  
Hill beyond.

The hawthorn white i' the hedgerow, and  
all the spring's attire  
In the comely land of Teme and Lugg, and  
Clent, and Clee, and Wyre.

Oh London girls are brave girls, in silk and  
cloth o' gold,  
And London shops are rare shops, where  
gallant things are sold,  
And bonnily clinks the gold there, but  
drowsily blinks the eye,  
And London Town of all towns I'm glad to  
hurry by.

Then, hey for covert and woodland, and  
ash and elm and oak,  
Tewkesbury inns, and Malvern roofs, and  
Worcester chimney smoke,  
The apple trees in the orchard, the cattle in  
the byre,  
And all the land from Ludlow town to  
Bredon church's spire.

Oh London tunes are new tunes, and Lon-  
don books are wise,

And London plays are rare plays, and fine  
to country eyes,

But craftily fares the knave there, and  
wickedly fares the Jew,

And London Town of all towns I'm glad to  
hurry through.

So hey for the road, the west road, by mill  
and forge and fold,

Scent of the fern and song of the lark by  
brook, and field, and wold,

To the comely folk at the hearth-stone and  
the talk beside the fire,

In the hearty land, where I was bred, my  
land of heart's desire.



## THE EMIGRANT

GOING by Daly's shanty I heard the boys  
within

Dancing the Spanish hornpipe to Driscoll's  
violin,

I heard the sea-boots shaking the rough  
planks of the floor,

But I was going westward, I hadn't heart  
for more.

All down the windy village the noise rang  
in my ears,

Old sea boots stamping, shuffling, it brought  
the bitter tears,

The old tune piped and quavered, the licks  
came clear and strong,

But I was going westward, I couldn't join  
the song.

There were the grey stone houses, the night  
wind blowing keen,  
The hill-sides pale with moonlight, the  
young corn springing green,  
The hearth nooks lit and kindly, with dear  
friends good to see,  
But I was going westward, and the ship  
waited me.

## PORT OF HOLY PETER

THE blue laguna rocks and quivers,  
Dull gurgling eddies twist and spin,  
The climate does for people's livers,  
It's a nasty place to anchor in  
Is Spanish port,  
Fever port,  
Port of Holy Peter.

The town begins on the sea-beaches,  
And the town's mad with the stinging  
flies,  
The drinking water's mostly leeches,  
It's a far remove from Paradise  
Is Spanish port,  
Fever port,  
Port of Holy Peter.

There were f There's sand-bagging and throat-slitting,  
w And quiet graves in the sea slime,  
The ' Stabbing, of course, and rum-hitting,  
Dirt, and drink, and stink, and crime,  
In Spanish port,  
Fever port,  
Port of Holy Peter.

All the day the wind's blowing  
From the sick swamp below the hills,  
All the night the plague's growing,  
And the dawn brings the fever chills,  
In Spanish port,  
Fever port,  
Port of Holy Peter.

You get a thirst there's no slaking,  
You get the chills and fever-shakes,  
Tongue yellow and head aching,  
And then the sleep that never wakes.

And all the year the heat's baking,  
The sea rots and the earth quakes,  
In Spanish port,  
Fever port,  
Port of Holy Peter.

## BEAUTY

I HAVE seen dawn and sunset on moors and  
windy hills

Coming in solemn beauty like slow old  
tunes of Spain :

I have seen the lady April bringing the  
daffodils,

Bringing the springing grass and the soft  
warm April rain.

I have heard the song of the blossoms and  
the old chant of the sea,

And seen strange lands from under the  
arched white sails of ships ;

But the loveliest things of beauty God ever  
has showed to me,

Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and  
the dear red curve of her lips.

## THE SEEKERS

FRIENDS and loves we have none, nor  
wealth nor blessed abode,  
But the hope of the City of God at the  
other end of the road.

Not for us are content, and quiet, and peace  
of mind,  
For we go seeking a city that we shall never  
find.

There is no solace on earth for us — for  
such as we —  
Who search for a hidden city that we shall  
never see.

Only the road and the dawn, the sun, the  
wind, and the rain,  
And the watch fire under stars, and sleep,  
and the road again.

We seek the City of God, and the haunt  
where beauty dwells,  
And we find the noisy mart and the sound  
of burial bells.

Never the golden city, where radiant people  
meet,  
But the dolorous town where mourners are  
going about the street.

We travel the dusty road till the light of  
the day is dim,  
And sunset shows us spires away on the  
world's rim.



We travel from dawn to dusk, till the day  
is past and by,  
Seeking the Holy City beyond the rim of  
the sky.

Friends and loves we have none, nor wealth  
nor blest abode,  
But the hope of the City of God at the  
other end of the road.

## PRAYER

WHEN the last sea is sailed, when the last  
shallow's charted,

When the last field is reaped, and the last  
harvest stored,

When the last fire is out and the last guest  
departed,

Grant the last prayer that I shall pray, be  
good to me, O Lord.

And let me pass in a night at sea, a night  
of storm and thunder,

In the loud crying of the wind through sail  
and rope and spar,

Send me a ninth great peaceful wave to  
drown and roll me under

To the cold tunny-fish's home where the  
drowned galleons are.

And in the dim green quiet place far out of  
sight and hearing,

Grant I may hear at whiles the wash and  
thresh of the sea-foam

About the fine keen bows of the stately  
clippers steering

Towards the lone northern star and the fair  
ports of home.

## DAWN

THE dawn comes cold : the haystack smokes,  
The green twigs crackle in the fire,  
The dew is dripping from the oaks,  
And sleepy men bear milking-yokes  
Slowly towards the cattle-byre.

Down in the town a clock strikes six,  
The grey east heaven burns and glows,  
The dew shines on the thatch of ricks,  
A slow old crone comes gathering sticks,  
The red cock in the ox-yard crows.

Beyond the stack where we have lain  
The road runs twisted like a snake  
(The white road to the land of Spain),  
The road that we must foot again,  
Though the feet halt and the heart ache.

## LAUGH AND BE MERRY

LAUGH and be merry, remember, better the  
world with a song,  
Better the world with a blow in the teeth of  
a wrong.

Laugh, for the time is brief, a thread the  
length of a span.

Laugh and be proud to belong to the old  
proud pageant of man.

Laugh and be merry: remember, in olden  
time.

God made Heaven and Earth for joy He  
took in a rhyme,

Made them, and filled them full with the  
strong red wine of His mirth,

The splendid joy of the stars: the joy of  
the earth.

So we must laugh and drink from the deep  
    blue cup of the sky,  
Join the jubilant song of the great stars  
    sweeping by,  
Laugh, and battle, and work, and drink of the  
    wine outpoured  
In the dear green earth, the sign of the joy  
    of the Lord.

Laugh and be merry together, like brothers  
    akin,  
Guesting awhile in the rooms of a beautiful  
    inn,  
Glad till the dancing stops, and the lilt of  
    the music ends.  
Laugh till the game is played; and be you  
    merry, my friends.

## JUNE TWILIGHT

THE twilight comes ; the sun  
Dips down and sets,  
The boys have done  
Play at the nets.

In a warm golden glow  
The woods are steeped.  
The shadows grow ;  
The bat has cheeped.

Sweet smells the new-mown hay ;  
The mowers pass  
Home, each his way,  
Through the grass.

The night-wind stirs the fern,  
    A night-jar spins ;  
The windows burn  
    In the inns.

Dusky it grows. The moon !  
    The dews descend.  
Love, can this beauty in our hearts  
    End ?



## ROADWAYS

ONE road leads to London,  
One road runs to Wales,  
My road leads me seawards  
To the white dipping sails.

One road leads to the river,  
As it goes singing slow ;  
My road leads to shipping,  
Where the bronzed sailors go.

Leads me, lures me, calls me  
To salt green tossing sea ;  
A road without earth's road-dust  
Is the right road for me.

A wet road heaving, shining,  
And wild with seagulls' cries,

A mad salt sea-wind blowing  
The salt spray in my eyes.

My road calls me, lures me  
West, east, south, and north ;  
Most roads lead men homewards,  
My road leads me forth

To add more miles to the tally  
Of grey miles left behind,  
In quest of that one beauty  
God put me here to find.

## MIDSUMMER NIGHT

THE perfect disc of the sacred moon  
Through still blue heaven serenely swims,  
And the lone bird's liquid music brims  
The peace of the night with a perfect tune.

This is that holiest night of the year  
When (the mowers say) may be heard and  
seen  
The ghostly court of the English queen,  
Who rides to harry and hunt the deer.

And the woodland creatures cower awake,  
A strange unrest is on harts and does,  
For the maiden Dian a-hunting goes,  
And the trembling deer are afoot in the  
brake.

They start at a shaken leaf: the sound  
Of a dry twig snapped by a squirrel's foot  
Is a nameless dread: and to them the  
hoot

Of a mousing owl is the cry of a hound.

Oh soon the forest will ring with cries,  
The dim green coverts will flash: the  
grass

Will glow as the radiant hunters pass  
After the quarry with burning eyes.

The hurrying feet will range unstayed  
Of questing goddess and hunted fawn,  
Till the east is grey with the sacred dawn,  
And the red cock wakens the milking maid.

## THE HARPER'S SONG

THIS sweetness trembling from the strings  
The music of my troublous lute  
Hath timed Herodias' daughter's foot ;  
Setting a-clink her ankle-rings  
Whenas she danced to feasted kings.

Where gemmed apparel burned and caught  
The sunset 'neath the golden dome,  
To the dark beauties of old Rome  
My sorrowful lute hath haply brought  
Sad memories sweet with tender thought.

When night had fallen and lights and fires  
Were darkened in the homes of men,  
Some sighing echo stirred : — and then  
The old cunning wakened from the wires  
The old sorrows and the old desires.

Dead Kings in long forgotten lands,  
And all dead beauteous women; some  
Whose pride imperial hath become  
Old armour rusting in the sands  
And shards of iron in dusty hands,

Have heard my lyre's soft rise and fall  
Go trembling down the paven ways,  
Till every heart was all ablaze —  
Hasty each foot — to obey the call  
To triumph or to funeral.

Could I begin again the slow  
Sweet mournful music filled with tears,  
Surely the old, dead, dusty ears  
Would hear; the old drowsy eyes would  
glow,  
Old memories come; old hopes and fears,  
And time restore the long ago.

## THE GENTLE LADY

So beautiful, so dainty-sweet,  
So like a lyre's delightful touch —  
A beauty perfect, ripe, complete  
That art's own hand could only smutch  
And nature's self not better much.

So beautiful, so purely wrought,  
Like a fair missal penned with hymns,  
So gentle, so surpassing thought —  
A beauteous soul in lovely limbs,  
A lantern that an angel trims.

So simple-sweet, without a sin,  
Like gentle music gently timed,  
Like rhyme-words coming aptly in,  
To round a moonéd poem rhymed  
To tunes the laughing bells have chimed.

## THE DEAD KNIGHT

THE cleanly rush of the mountain air,  
And the mumbling, grumbling humble-bees,  
Are the only things that wander there.  
The pitiful bones are laid at ease,  
The grass has grown in his tangled hair,  
And a rambling bramble binds his knees.

To shrieve his soul from the pangs of hell,  
The only requiem bells that rang  
Were the harebell and the heather bell.  
Hushed he is with the holy spell  
In the gentle hymn the wind sang,  
And he lies quiet, and sleeps well.  
He is bleached and blanched with the sum-  
mer sun ;

The misty rain and the cold dew



Have altered him from the kingly one  
Whom his lady loved, and his men knew,  
And dwindled him to a skeleton.

The vetches have twined about his bones,  
The stragging ivy twists and creeps  
In his eye-sockets: the nettle keeps  
Vigil about him while he sleeps.  
Over his body the wind moans  
With a dreary tune throughout the day,  
In a chorus wistful, eerie, thin  
As the gulls' cry, as the cry in the bay,  
The mournful word the seas say  
When tides are wandering out or in.

## SORROW OF MYDATH

WEARY the cry of the wind is, weary the  
sea,

Weary the heart and the mind and the  
body of me,

Would I were out of it, done with it, would  
I could be

A white gull crying along the desolate  
sands.

Outcast, derelict soul in a body accurst,  
Standing drenched with the spindrift, stand-  
ing athirst,

For the cool green waves of death to arise  
and burst

In a tide of quiet for me on the desolate  
sands.

Would that the waves and the long white  
hair of the spray

Would gather in splendid terror, and blot  
me away

To the sunless place of the wrecks where  
the waters sway

Gently, dreamily, quietly over desolate  
sands.

## TWILIGHT

TWILIGHT it is, and the far woods are dim,  
and the rocks cry and call.

Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist,  
and a star over all,

There by the rick, where they thresh, is the  
drone at an end,

Twilight it is, and I travel the road with  
my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who  
were dear long ago in the past,

Beautiful friends who are dead, though I  
know that death cannot last ;

Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust  
has defiled,

Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was  
a child.

## INVOCATION

O WANDERER into many brains,  
O spark the emperor's purple hides,  
You sow the dusk with fiery grains  
When the gold horseman rides.  
O beauty on the darkness hurled,  
Be it through me you shame the world.

## POSTED AS MISSING

UNDER all her topsails she trembled like a  
stag,  
The wind made a ripple in her bonny red  
flag ;  
They cheered her from the shore and they  
cheered her from the pier,  
And under all her topsails she trembled like  
a deer.

So she passed swaying, where the green  
seas run,  
Her wind-steadied topsails were stately in  
the sun ;  
There was glitter on the water from her  
red port light,  
So she passed swaying, till she was out  
of sight.

Long and long ago it was, a weary time  
it is,

The bones of her sailor-men are coral plants  
by this;

Coral plants, and shark-weed, and a mer-  
maid's comb,

And if the fishers net them they never  
bring them home.

It's rough on sailors' women. They have  
to mangle hard,

And stitch at dungarees till their finger-  
ends are scarred,

Thinking of the sailor-men who sang among  
the crowd,

Hoisting of her topsails when she sailed so  
proud.

## A CREED

I HOLD that when a person dies  
His soul returns again to earth ;  
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise  
Another mother gives him birth.  
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain  
The old soul takes the roads again.

Such is my own belief and trust ;  
This hand, this hand that holds the pen,  
Has many a hundred times been dust  
And turned, as dust, to dust again ;  
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone  
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

All that I rightly think or do,  
Or make, or spoil, or bless, or blast,



Is curse or blessing justly due

For sloth or effort in the past.

My life's a statement of the sum

Of vice indulged, or overcome.

I know that in my lives to be

My sorry heart will ache and burn,

And worship, unavailingly,

The woman whom I used to spurn,

And shake to see another have

The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,

In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,

A carrion flock of homing-birds,

The gibes and scorns I uttered here.

The brave word that I failed to speak

Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

And as I wander on the roads

I shall be helped and healed and blessed;

Dear words shall cheer and be as goads

To urge to heights before unguessed.

My road shall be the road I made;

All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,

In this long war beneath the stars;

So shall a glory wreath my head,

So shall I faint and show the scars,

Until this case, this clogging mould,

Be smithied all to kingly gold.

## WHEN BONY DEATH

WHEN bony Death has chilled her gentle  
blood,

And dimmed the brightness of her wistful  
eyes,

And changed her glorious beauty into mud  
By his old skill in hateful wizardries ;

When an old lichened marble strives to tell  
How sweet a grace, how red a lip was  
hers ;

When rheumy grey-beards say, "I knew her  
well,"

Showing the grave to curious worshippers ;

When all the roses that she sowed in me  
Have dripped their crimson petals and  
decayed,

Leaving no greenery on any tree

That her dear hands in my heart's garden  
laid,

Then grant, old Time, to my green moulder-  
ing skull,

These songs may keep her memory beauti-  
ful.

## THE WEST WIND

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of  
birds' cries ;

I never hear the west wind but tears are in  
my eyes.

For it comes from the west lands, the old  
brown hills,

And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as  
tired as mine,

Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's  
like wine.

There is cool green grass there, where men  
may lie at rest,

And the thrushes are in song there, fluting  
from the nest.

“Will you not come home, brother? You  
have been long away.

It's April, and blossom time, and white is  
the spray:

And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is  
the rain,

Will you not come home, brother, home to  
us again?

The young corn is green, brother, where the  
rabbits run;

It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm  
rain and sun.

It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a  
man's brain,

To hear the wild bees and see the merry  
spring again.

Larks are singing in the west, brother,  
above the green wheat,

So will you not come home, brother, and  
rest your tired feet?

I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep  
for aching eyes,"

Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of  
birds' cries.

It's the white road westwards is the road I  
must tread

To the green grass, the cool grass, and rest  
for heart and head,

To the violets and the brown brooks and  
the thrushes' song

In the fine land, the west land, the land  
where I belong.

## HER HEART

HER heart is always doing lovely things,  
Filling my wintry mind with simple  
flowers ;  
Playing sweet tunes on my untuned strings,  
Delighting all my undelightful hours.

She plays me like a lute, what tune she will,  
No string in me but trembles at her  
touch,  
Shakes into sacred music, or is still,  
Trembles or stops, or swells, her skill is  
such.  
And in the dusty tavern of my soul  
Where filthy lusts drink witches' brew for  
wine,



Her gentle hand still keeps me from the  
bowl,  
Still keeps me man, saves me from being  
swine.

All grace in me, all sweetness in my verse,  
Is hers, is my dear girl's, and only hers.

## BEING HER FRIEND

BEING her friend, I do not care, not I,  
How gods or men may wrong me, beat  
me down ;

Her word's sufficient star to travel by,  
I count her quiet praise sufficient crown.

Being her friend, I do not covet gold,  
Save for a royal gift to give her pleasure ;  
To sit with her, and have her hand to hold,  
Is wealth, I think, surpassing minted  
treasure.

Being her friend, I only covet art,  
A white pure flame to search me as I  
trace

In crooked letters from a throbbing heart  
The hymn to beauty written on her face.

## FRAGMENTS

TROY TOWN is covered up with weeds,  
The rabbits and the pismires brood  
On broken gold, and shards, and beads  
Where Priam's ancient palace stood.

The floors of many a gallant house  
Are matted with the roots of grass;  
The glow-worm and the nimble mouse  
Among her ruins flit and pass.

And there, in orts of blackened bone,  
The widowed Trojan beauties lie,  
And Simois babbles over stone  
And waps and gurgles to the sky.

Once there were merry days in Troy,  
Her chimneys smoked with cooking meals,  
The passing chariots did annoy  
The sunning housewives at their wheels.

And many a lovely Trojan maid  
Set Trojan lads to lovely things ;  
The game of life was nobly played,  
They played the game like Queens and  
Kings.

So that, when Troy had greatly passed  
In one red roaring fiery coal,  
The courts the Grecians overcast  
Became a city in the soul.

In some green island of the sea,  
Where now the shadowy coral grows  
In pride and pomp and empery  
The courts of old Atlantis rose.

In many a glittering house of glass  
The Atlanteans wandered there ;  
The paleness of their faces was  
Like ivory, so pale they were.

And hushed they were, no noise of words  
In those bright cities ever rang ;  
Only their thoughts, like golden birds,  
About their chambers thrilled and sang.

They knew all wisdom, for they knew  
The souls of those Egyptian Kings  
Who learned, in ancient Babilu,  
The beauty of immortal things.

They knew all beauty — when they thought  
The air chimed like a stricken lyre,  
The elemental birds were wrought,  
The golden birds became a fire.

And straight to busy camps and marts  
The singing flames were swiftly gone ;  
The trembling leaves of human hearts  
Hid boughs for them to perch upon.

And men in desert places, men  
Abandoned, broken, sick with fears,

Rose singing, swung their swords agen,  
And laughed and died among the spears.

The green and greedy seas have drowned  
That city's glittering walls and towers,  
Her sunken minarets are crowned  
With red and russet water-flowers.

In towers and rooms and golden courts  
The shadowy coral lifts her sprays ;  
The scrawl hath gorged her broken orts,  
The shark doth haunt her hidden ways.

But, at the falling of the tide,  
The golden birds still sing and gleam,  
The Atlanteans have not died,  
Immortal things still give us dream.

The dream that fires man's heart to make,  
To build, to do, to sing or say  
A beauty Death can never take,  
An Adam from the crumbled clay.

## BORN FOR NOUGHT ELSE

BORN for nought else, for nothing but for  
this,

To watch the soft blood throbbing in her  
throat,

To think how comely sweet her body is,  
And learn the poem of her face by rote.

Born for nought else but to attempt a  
rhyme

That shall describe her womanhood  
aright,

And make her holy to the end of Time,  
And be my soul's acquittal in God's  
sight.

Born for nought else but to expressly mark  
The music of her dear delicious ways;

Born but to perish meanly in the dark,  
Yet born to be the man to sing her  
praise.

Born for nought else: there is a spirit tells  
My lot's a King's, being born for nothing  
else.



## TEWKESBURY ROAD

It is good to be out on the road, and going  
one knows not where,  
Going through meadow and village, one  
knows not whither nor why;  
Through the grey light drift of the dust, in  
the keen cool rush of the air,  
Under the flying white clouds, and the  
broad blue lift of the sky.

And to halt at the chattering brook, in the  
tall green fern at the brink  
Where the harebell grows, and the gorse,  
and the foxgloves purple and white;  
Where the shy-eyed delicate deer troop  
down to the brook to drink  
When the stars are mellow and large at  
the coming on of the night.

O, to feel the beat of the rain, and the  
homely smell of the earth,

Is a tune for the blood to jig to, a joy  
past power of words;

And the blessed green comely meadows are  
all a-ripple with mirth

At the noise of the lambs at play and the  
dear wild cry of the birds.

## THE DEATH ROOMS

My soul has many an old decaying room  
Hung with the ragged arras of the past,  
Where startled faces flicker in the gloom,  
And horrid whispers set the cheek aghast.

Those dropping rooms are haunted by a  
death,  
A something like a worm gnawing a  
brain,  
That bids me heed what bitter lesson saith  
The blind wind beating on the window-  
pane.

None dwells in those old rooms: none ever  
can —

I pass them through at night with hidden  
head;

Lock'd rotting rooms her eyes must never  
scan,

Floors that her blessed feet must never  
tread.

Haunted old rooms : rooms she must never  
know,

Where death-ticks knock and mouldering  
panels glow.

## IGNORANCE

SINCE I have learned Love's shining alpha-  
bet,

And spelled in ink what's writ in me in  
flame,

And borne her sacred image richly set

Here in my heart to keep me quit of  
shame ;

Since I have learned how wise and passing  
wise

Is the dear friend whose beauty I extol,  
And know how sweet a soul looks through  
the eyes,

That are so pure a window to her soul ;

Since I have learned how rare a woman  
shows

As much in all she does as in her looks,  
And seen the beauty of her shame the  
    rose,

And dim the beauty writ about in books ;

All I have learned, and can learn, shows me  
    this —

How scant, how slight, my knowledge of  
    her is.

## SEA FEVER

I MUST go down to the seas again, to the  
lonely sea and the sky,

And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to  
steer her by ;

And the wheel's kick and the wind's song  
and the white sail's shaking,

And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a  
grey dawn breaking,

I must go down to the seas again, for the  
call of the running tide

Is a wild call and a clear call that may not  
be denied ;

And all I ask is a windy day with the white  
clouds flying,

And the flung spray and the blown spume,  
and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the  
vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way  
where the wind's like a whetted knife ;  
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laugh-  
ing fellow-rover,  
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when  
the long trick's over.



## THE WATCH IN THE WOOD

WHEN Death has laid her in his quietude,  
And dimmed the glow of her benignant  
star,

Her tired limbs shall rest within a wood,  
In a green glade where oaks and beeches  
are,

Where the shy fawns, the pretty fawns, the  
deer,

With mild brown eyes shall view her  
spirit's husk ;

The sleeping woman of her will appear,  
The maiden Dian shining through the dusk.

And, when the stars are white as twilight  
fails,

And the green leaves are hushed, and the  
winds swoon,

The calm pure thrilling throats of nightin-  
gales

Shall hymn her sleeping beauty to the  
moon.

All the woods hushed — save for a dripping  
rose,

All the woods dim — save where a glow-  
worm glows.

Brimming the quiet woods with holiness,  
The lone brown birds will hymn her till  
the dawn,

The delicate, shy, dappled deer will press  
Soft pitying muzzles on her swathèd  
lawn.

The little pretty rabbits running by.  
Will pause among the dewy grass to  
peep,

Their thudding hearts affrighted to espy  
The maiden Dian lying there asleep.

Brown, lustrous, placid eyes of sylvan  
things

Will wonder at the quiet in her face,  
While from the thorny branch the singer  
brings

Beauty and peace to that immortal place.

Until the grey dawn sets the woods astir  
The pure birds' thrilling psalm will mourn  
for her.

C. L. M.

IN the dark womb where I began  
My mother's life made me a man.  
Through all the months of human birth  
Her beauty fed my common earth.  
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,  
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave  
She cannot see the life she gave.  
For all her love, she cannot tell  
Whether I use it ill or well,  
Nor knock at dusty doors to find  
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,  
She would not know her little son,  
I am so grown. If we should meet

She would pass by me in the street,  
Unless my soul's face let her see  
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind  
My debt to her and womankind?  
What woman's happier life repays  
Her for those months of wretched days?  
For all my mouthless body leeches  
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said  
In thanks to that dear woman dead?  
Men triumph over women still,  
Men trample women's rights at will,  
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

\* \* \* \*

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

## WASTE

No rose but fades : no glory but must pass :

No hue but dims : no precious silk but  
frets.

Her beauty must go underneath the grass,

Under the long roots of the violets.

O, many glowing beauties Time has hid

In that dark, blotting box the villain  
sends.

He covers over with a coffin-lid

Mothers and sons, and foes and lovely  
friends.

Maids that were redly-lipped and comely-  
skinned,

Friends that deserved a sweeter bed than  
clay,

All are as blossoms blowing down the  
wind,  
Things the old envious villain sweeps  
away.

And though the mutterer laughs and  
church bells toll,  
Death brings another April to the soul.

### THIRD MATE

ALL the sheets are clacking, all the blocks  
are whining,

The sails are frozen stiff and the wetted  
decks are shining ;

The reef's in the topsails, and it's coming  
on to blow,

And I think of the dear girl I left long  
ago.

Grey were her eyes, and her hair was long  
and bonny,

Golden was her hair, like the wild bees'  
honey.

And I was but a dog, and a mad one to  
despise,

The gold of her hair and the grey of her  
eyes.



There's the sea before me, and my home's  
behind me,  
And beyond there the strange lands where  
nobody will mind me,  
No one but the girls with the paint upon  
their cheeks,  
Who sell away their beauty to whomsoever  
seeks.

There'll be drink and women there, and  
songs and laughter,  
Peace from what is past and from all that  
follows after;  
And a fellow will forget how a woman lies  
awake,  
Lonely in the night watch crying for his  
sake.

Black it blows and bad and it howls like  
slaughter,

And the ship she shudders as she takes the  
water.

Hissing flies the spindrift like a wind-  
blown smoke,

And I think of a woman and a heart I  
broke.

## THE WILD DUCK

TWILIGHT. Red in the west.  
Dimness. A glow on the wood.  
The teams plod home to rest.  
The wild duck come to glean.  
O souls not understood,  
What a wild cry in the pool;  
What things have the farm ducks  
seen  
That they cry so — huddle and cry?

Only the soul that goes.  
Eager. Eager. Flying.  
Over the globe of the moon,  
Over the wood that glows.  
Wings linked. Necks a-strain,

A rush and a wild crying.

\* \* \*

A cry of the long pain

In the reeds of a steel lagoon.

In a land that no man knows.

## CHRISTMAS, 1903

O, THE sea breeze will be steady, and the  
tall ship's going trim,  
And the dark blue skies are paling, and  
the white stars burning dim ;  
The long night watch is over, and the long  
sea-roving done,  
And yonder light is the Start Point light,  
and yonder comes the sun.

O, we have been with the Spaniards, and  
far and long on the sea ;  
But there are the twisted chimneys, and  
the gnarled old inns on the quay.  
The wind blows keen as the day breaks,  
the roofs are white with the rime,  
And the church-bells ring as the sun comes  
up to call men in to Prime.

The church-bells rock and jangle, and there  
is peace on the earth.

Peace and good will and plenty and Christ-  
mas games and mirth.

O, the gold glints bright on the wind-vane  
as it shifts above the squire's house,  
And the water of the bar of Salcombe is  
muttering about the bows.

O, the salt sea tide of Salcombe, it  
wrinkles into wisps of foam,  
And the church-bells ring in Salcombe to  
ring poor sailors home.

The belfry rocks as the bells ring, the  
chimes are merry as a song,

They ring home wandering sailors who  
have been homeless long.

## THE WORD

My friend, my bonny friend, when we are  
old,

And hand in hand go tottering down the  
hill,

May we be rich in love's refinèd gold,

May love's gold coin be current with us  
still.

May love be sweeter for the vanished  
days,

And your most perfect beauty still as  
dear

As when your troubled singer stood at  
gaze

In the dear March of a most sacred  
year.

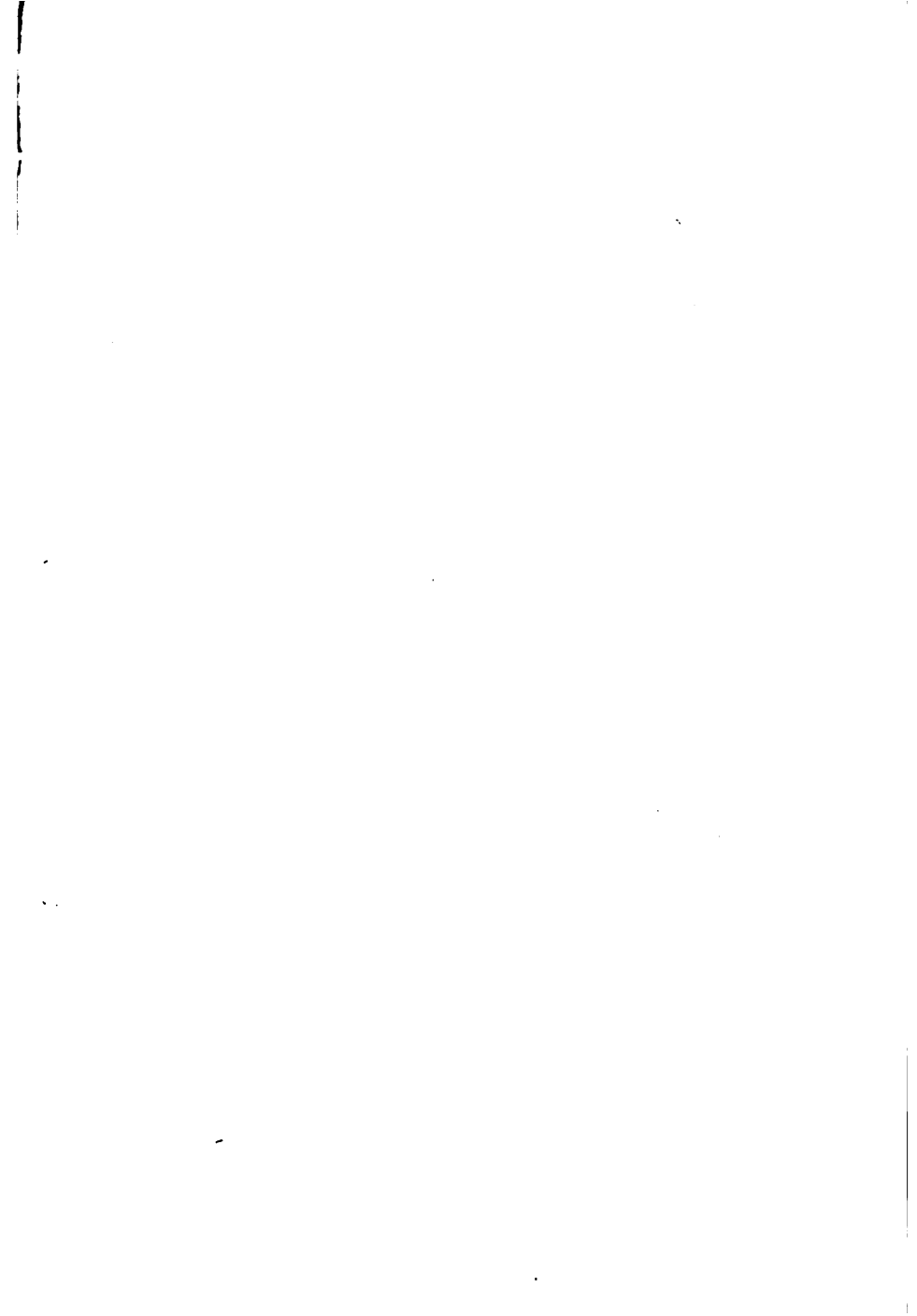
May what we are be all we might have  
been,

And that potential, perfect, O my friend,  
And may there still be many sheafs to  
glean

In our love's acre, comrade, till the end.

And may we find, when ended is the page,  
Death but a tavern on our pilgrimage.





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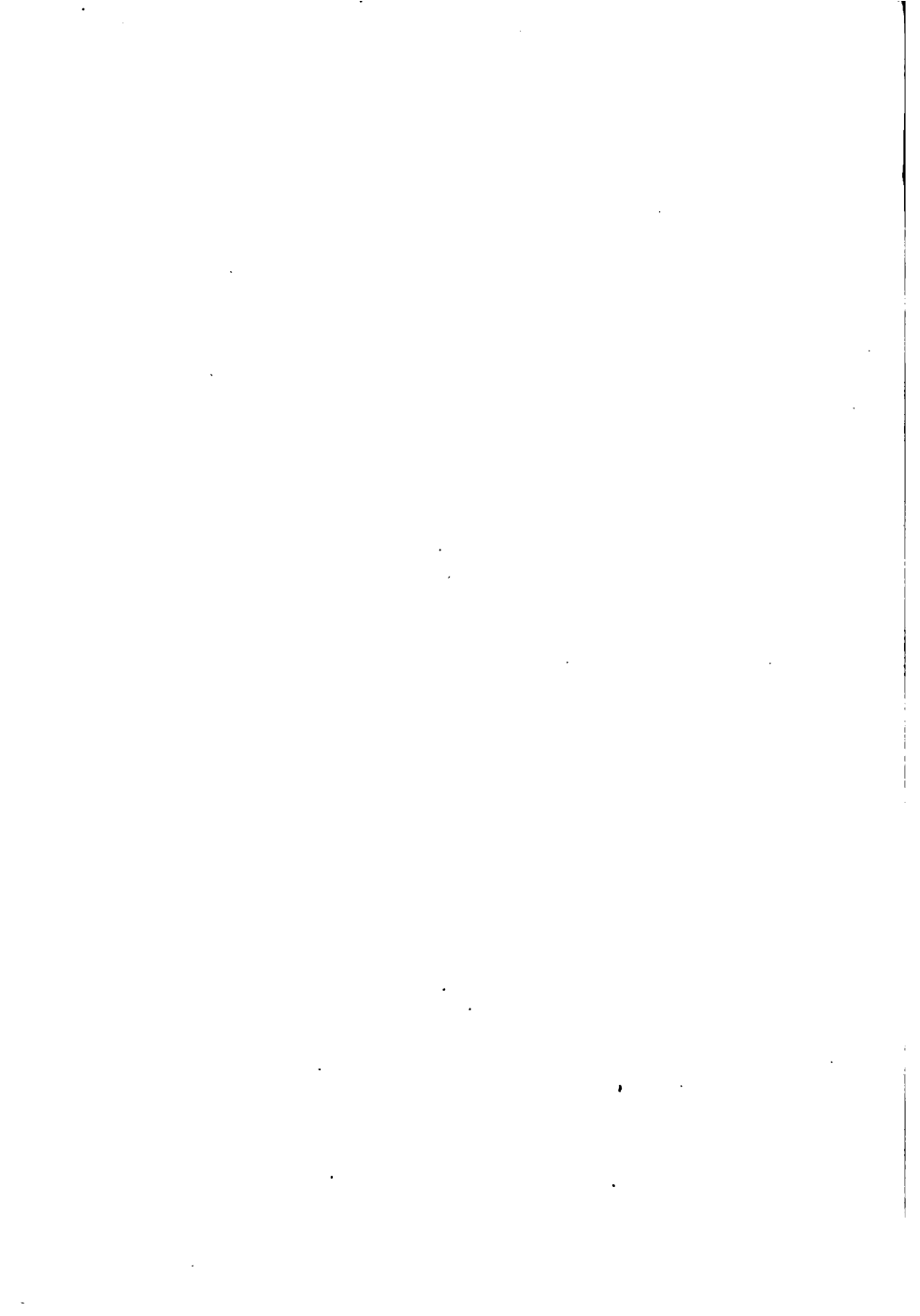










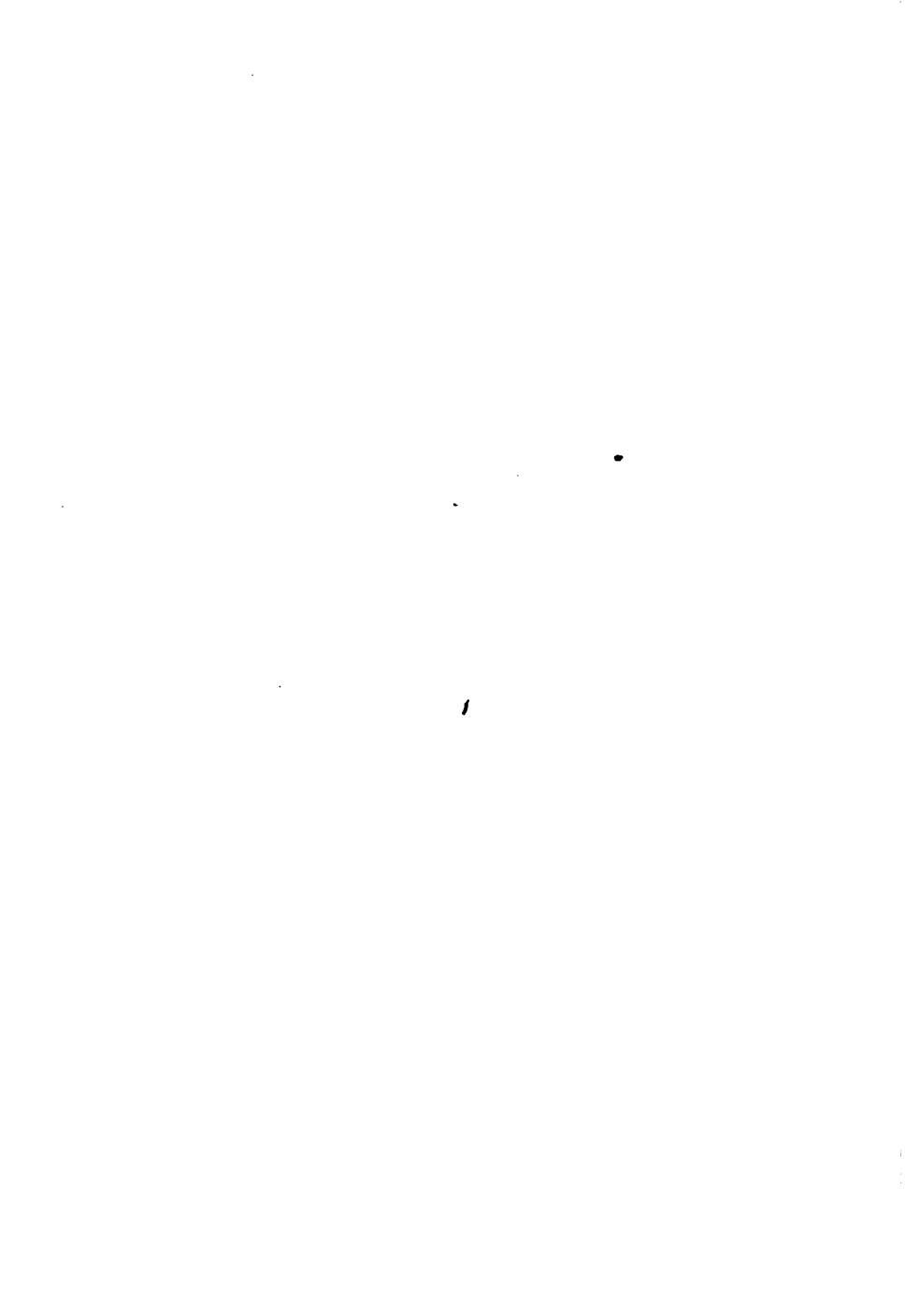












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